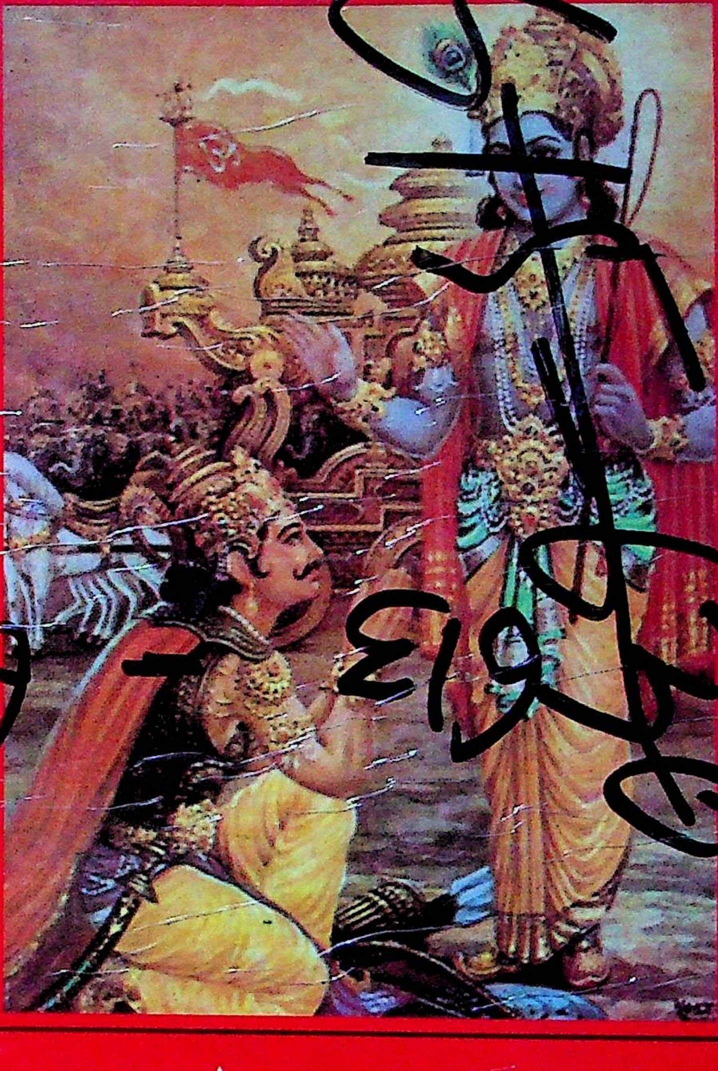

Tat Tvam Asi

The Universal Message in The Bhagavadgītā

Pathikonda Viswambara Nath

TAT TVAM ASI

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PATHIKONDA VISWAMBARA NATH

Volume II
(Chapters 11-18)

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Volume II
(Chapters 11-18)

CHAPTER 11

VIŚVARŪPA-DARŚANA-YOGA

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as a great teacher, introduced His student Arjuna to the field of Self-knowledge in the earlier chapters. He explained what *ātmā* is, how one should work, who is a *jñānī*, who is a *yogī* etc. In the 10th chapter, He gave a theoretical description of ''the Lord's presence in all''.

In this chapter, He displays the practical side of the theory. As one goes higher and higher, in any field of science, one has to have practical lessons as well. Practicals confirm the theory and leave an everlasting impression of our understanding the subject.

Arjuna has to have a vision of ''Lord in all'' to belive the theory of '*vibhūti-yoga*'. As we have discussed before, it is impossible for the physical eye to see this phenomenon. One needs ''the eye of knowledge'' (wisdom) to see this.

To see the whole universe as 'one', there should not be any space between objects of names and forms. It is the space that divides objects from one another. If I keep my fingers joined together, there is no difference as thumb, ring-finger, middle finger, index finger and little finger. If I introduce space between them, I can see five different fingers.

Out of a putty which is kept in a small box a child can make many shapes and display them on her table. The space between them gives us an idea of the different forms she has made. If the child joins them all together, one can see a part of different forms in this ''mass of forms without space''. (This is *Viśvarupa-Darśana*.) The child can squeeze all forms together and make it into a lump and put it in the box (unmanifested form of the universe).

Unfortunately, the universe being so vast with millions and millions of objects, one cannot see them all as one without space in between. The cosmic form of the Lord is ''Universe of names and forms with no space between forms.''

Arjuna requests the Lord for practical demonstration of *vibhūti yoga*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives Him the 'eye of knowledge' to appreciate the cosmic form. The poet Vyāsa is at his best in this chapter. It is extremely beautiful in its poetic description of the ''Cosmic Form' and Arjuna's reaction on seeing what is generally impossible to see.

अर्जुन उवाच
मदनुग्रहाय परमं गुह्यमध्यात्मसंज्ञितम् ।
यत्त्वयोक्तं वचस्तेन मोहोऽयं विगतो मम ॥१॥

arjuna uvāca
madanugrahāya paramaṁ guhyam adhyātmasṁjñitam |
yat tvayo'ktaṁ vacas tena moho'yaṁ vigato mama ||1||

Arjuna said

By the profound discourse on highest secret concerning the Self, spoken by you out of compassion for me, my delusion is gone.

vigataḥ: Gone.

The student Arjuna confesses to the teacher that the delusion is gone. What was the delusion? 'I'-ness, 'My'-ness in names and forms. Arjuna was unhappy at the thought of so many people dying in the war, including his elders, family and friends. He did not want to commit the sin of killing his own people. He wanted to run away from the battlefield. His delusion was his ignorance of the soul in himself and others.

Out of compassion, Śrī Kṛṣṇa taught the secret to Arjuna, Arjuna says *madanugrahayā*. The student is greatful for the love shown by his *guru*. Why did the *guru* show compassion? Because Arjuna had faith in his *guru* and he wanted to know 'the Truth'. He wanted his *guru* to clear his confusion (ignorance). If we approach the Lord in the same spirit, He will show the same love to us also. We should surrender at the feet of the Lord unconditionally.

भवाप्ययौ हि भूतानां श्रुतौ विस्तरशो मया ।
त्वत्तः कमलपत्राक्ष माहात्म्यमपि चाव्ययम् ।।२।।
bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānāṁ śrutau vistaraśo mayā |
tvattaḥ kamalapatrākṣa māhātmyam api cā'vyayam ||2||

O Kṛṣṇa, from you verily have been heard in detail by me, the origin and dissolution of beings and also your inexhaustible divine power.

एवमेतद्यथात्थ त्वमात्मानं परमेश्वर ।
द्रष्टुमिच्छामि ते रूपमैश्वरं पुरुषोत्तम ।।३।।
evam etad yathāttha tvamātmānaṁ parameśvara |
draṣṭum icchāmi te rūpam aiśvaraṁ puruṣottama ||3||

O Supreme Lord, as you have described yourself, I wish to see your cosmic form, O Puruṣottama.

Arjuna wants to see with his own eyes, the cosmic form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He does not have any doubt that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his *guru,* is the Lord Himself. He is simply asking for a practical demonstration.

मन्यसे यदि तच्छक्यं मया द्रष्टुमिति प्रभो ।
योगेश्वर ततो मे त्वं र्शयात्मानमव्ययम् ।।४।।
manyase yadi tac chakyaṁ mayā draṣṭum iti prabho |
yogeśvara tato me tvaṁ darśayātmānam avyayam ||4||

O Lord of yoga, if you think it is possible for me to see it, will you please, then, show me your imperishable form.

Immediately after requesting the Lord to show him His cosmic form, Arjuna does not want to offend his teacher. He thought he might have gone too far in asking for such a demonstration. He therefore says 'please' and requests to show it only if his teacher thinks that the student can withstand such great vision.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
पश्य मे पार्थ रूपाणि शतशोऽथ सहस्रशः।
नानाविधानि दिव्यानि नानावर्णाकृतीनि च ।।५।।

śrī bhagavān uvāca
***paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ* ।**
***nānāvidhāni divyāni nānāvarṇākṛtīni ca* ।।4।।**

The Lord said

Behold O Pārtha, forms of Me, by hundreds and thousands of different sorts, divine and of various colours and shapes.

nānāvarṇākṛtīni: Of different colours and shapes.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is showing not 'one in many' but 'many in one'. To imagine all the shapes of pots one can make with clay, is comparatively hard in comparison to imagining clay in a single pot. The Lord is making Arjuna visualise, the 'many in one' form of Himself; it was already evident that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was 'many in one' but it had not been visualised by Arjuna. Arjuna was not tuned into see the form. The lens of his inner eye needed tuning to see the real Kṛṣṇa, the Universal Lord.

पश्यादित्यान्वसून्रुद्रानश्विनौ मरुतस्तथा ।
बहून्यदृष्टपूर्वाणि पश्याश्चर्याणि भारत ।।६।।

***paśyā dityān vasūn rudrān aśvinau marutas tathā* ।**
***bahūny adṛṣṭapūrvāṇi paśyāścaryāṇi bhārata* ।।6।।**

Behold, O Bhārata, the Ādityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Aśvins, the Maruts and also many wonderful forms never seen before.

The Ādityas and Vasus are described in chapter X, verse 21. The Rudras and Maruts are described in verse 23 of the same chapter. Aśvins is a new term used in this verse. It means 'possessed of horses'. It is the name given to two divinities who appear in the sky before dawn in a golden carriage drawn by horses. Different descriptions of Aśvins are given in different texts.

One mythological story of their origin is as follows. The Sun-god Vivasvat's wife is Saṁjñā. She could not stand the brilliance of her husband, and went to meditate in the form of a mare. Her husband, after searching for a long time, found her and assumed the form of a stallion. From this reunion the Aśvins were born. The Aśvins are commonly known as Aśvinī Kumāras (horsemen, twins) Aśvins are invoked in marriage ceremonies to bless the couple.

Aśvins bring divine goodwill to mankind. They are connected also with medicinal properties of plants. The healing pȯwer of plants is attributed to Aśvins. They are regarded as physicians of mankind. Some regard them as heaven and earth, others as day and night or as the sun and moon or as dawn and dusk.

इहैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं पश्याद्य सचराचरम् ।
मम देहे गुडाकेश यच्चान्यद्द्रष्टुमिच्छसि ।।७।।
ihalkasthaṁ jagat kṛtsnaṁ paśyā 'dya sacarācaram |
mama dehe guḍākeśa yac cānyad draṣṭum icchasi ||7||

Now, Guḍākeśa, behold, in this body, the whole universe, movable and immovable, and whatever else you desire to see, centred in one place.

The Lord is asking Arjuna to visualise 'many in one'. Whatever forms Arjuna is familiar with, will also be in that vision, the Lord says. There is nothing that is in the *jagat*, that cannot be found in 'The Special Vision'.

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनै वस्वचक्षुषा ।
दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।।८।।
na tu māṁ śakyase draṣṭum anenaiva svacakṣuṣā |
divyaṁ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram ||8||
But you cannot see Me with your own eyes. I will give you divine eyes. Behold My sovereign yoga.

Arjuna will no be able to see the cosmic form with his own physical eyes. He needs the special eye to see it and the Lord says He will give him the special 'divine eye'. In chapter 10, verse 10, the Lord says: *teṣāṁ satatayuktānāṁ dadāmi buddhiyogam*: "To the ever stead-fast, worshipping Me with love, I give *buddhi-yoga.*" To the deserved ones, He will give the *buddhi-yoga*". Knowledge is imparted to His devotees. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is imparting the "special eye of knowledge" to Arjuna. Arjuna's intellect has been tuned to 'realise the vision'. We know that the mind is greater than the eyes and other sense-organs and intellect is greater than our mind. We can only see as far as our lens in our eyes permits. We cannot see any more. With the help of other sense-organs, we receive more impulses and the mind "totally sees" the impulses received. The intellect analyses and sees it further.

Our eyes tell us that the objects are moving when the train we are in, is moving. But our intellect sees it better and says, it is the train that is moving and the objects are not moving. We do understand that what our eyes saw was false.

Similarly, what our eyes see as names and forms are false and our intellect needs spiritual education to see that. The *māyā* (our three *guṇas*) hides the 'Truth of Reality'. We should dispel the *māyā* by 'Knowledge' and we can see the 'Cosmic Form'.

सञ्जय उवाच
एवमुक्त्वा ततोराजन्महायोगेश्वरो हरिः ।
दर्शयामास पार्थाय परमं रूपमैश्वरम् ॥९॥

sañjaya uvāca
evam uktvā tato rājan mahāyogeśvaro hariḥ |
darśayāmāsa pārthāya paramaṁ rūpam aiśvaram ||9||

O king, having thus spoken, the great Lord of yoga, *Hari, showed to Arjuna His supreme divine form.*

Veda Vyāsa, as we know, had given he power to Sañjaya to visualise the battlefiled from his place in the palace with his king Dhṛtarāṣṭra. We are made to understand tha Arjuna saw the cosmic form and in return Sañjaya saw the form as well.

अनेकवक्त्रनयनमनेकाद्भुतदर्शनम् ।
अनेकदिव्याभरणं दिव्यानेकोद्यतायुधम् ।।१०।।
aneka-vaktra-nayanam anekādbhuta darśanam |
aneka-divyābharaṇaṁ divyānekodyatāyudham ||10||

With numerous mouths, eyes, with numerous wonderful sights, with numerous divine ornaments, with numerous divine weapons uplifted;

दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरं दिव्यागन्धानुलेपनम् ।
सर्वाश्चर्यमयं देवमनन्तं विश्वतो मुखम् ।।११।।
divya-mālyāmbara-dharaṁ divya-gandhānulepanam |
sarvāścaryamayaṁ devam anantaṁ viśvatomukham ||11||

Waring divine garlands and apparel, anointed with divine unguents, the all-wonderful, resplendent, endless, facing all sides.

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।
यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद्भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ।।१२।।
divi sūrya-sahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā |
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ ||12||

If the splendour of a thousand suns were to blaze togeher all at once in the sky, that would resemble the glory of that being.

Sañjaya is trying to express the impossible. Vyāsa, through the mouth of Sañjaya, has brought out the impossible in a beautiful poetic description. After all, Sañjaya is explaining it to his blind king. It would be impossible for the blind king to understand it because he has not seen anybody before.

As we have discussed, we who are also blind (spiritually) cannot comprehend this form. It is so resplendent, like the brilliance of a thousand suns. We cannot even look directly at one sun, how can we imagine the splendour of a thousand suns?

We also need to have knowledge to get the special eye to imagine the cosmic form.

तत्रैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रविभक्तमनेकधा ।
अपश्यद् देवदेवस्य शरीरे पाण्डवस्तदा ॥१३॥
tatraikasthaṁ jagat kṛtsnaṁ pravibhaktam anekadhā |
apaśyad devadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavas tadā ||13||

There, in the body of the God of gods, the Pāṇḍava then saw the whole universe resting in one, with all its groups.

This *śloka* says that Arjuna saw the whole universe in only one spot of that cosmic form. One cannot imagine about the rest of that cosmic form. We see the entire universe as different countries, different races, different groups of animals, birds, etc. though we are truly one. The Lord makes no differentiation between countries, religion, etc. It is we who cause confusion to ourselves by our differentiation. We should consider ourselves as part of one body and show universal love.

ततः स विस्मयाविष्टो हृष्टरोमा धनञ्जयः ।
प्रणम्य शिरसा देवं कृताञ्जलिरभाषत ॥१४॥
tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭo hṛṣṭaromā dhanañjayaḥ |
praṇamya śirasā devaṁ kṛtāñjalir abhāṣata ||14||

Then, he, Dhanañjaya, filled with wonder, with his hair standing on end, bowed down his head and with palms joined thus spoke to the Lord.

The cosmic form to be apparent must have been unnerving to anybody. This is explained as ''his hairs standing on end''. It is a common reaction. We all experience it on facing a sudden frightfull sight. What Arjuna saw was frightening but divine. Because of that, the great warrior did not run away. He had the mental composure to show his respect to the Lord and at the same time even managed to describe his feelings.

It is also said that when this form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa became manifest, the millions of soldiers on the battlefield fainted and none could remember what they saw. They were totally blinded by its brilliance, they did not know what had hit them.

अर्जुन उवाच
पश्यामि देवांस्तव देव देहेसर्वांस्तथा भूतविशेषसंघान् ।
ब्रह्माणमीशं कमलासनस्थमृषीश्च सर्वानुरगांश्च दिव्यान् ।।१५।।

arjuna uvāca
paśyāmi devāṁs tava deva dehe
***sarvāṁs tathā bhūta-viśeṣa-saṁghān* I**
brahmāṇam īśaṁ kamalāsanasthaṁ
***ṛṣīṁśca sarvān uragāṁś ca divyān* II15II**

Arjun said

O Lord, I see in your body all the gods, also hosts of various classes of beings, Brahmā, the Lord of Creation seated on the lotus, all the ṛṣis *and divine serpents.*

uragān: Serpents.

The word *īśam* could mean the Lord or Śiva. Vyāsa is trying to bring out that the Lord is not only *adhibhūta*, but also *adhidaiva*. All the different gods, including Brahmā, the Creator and Śiva are seen in this form.

Again, by attributing the meaning 'Śiva' to the word '*īśam*', we are asked to understand that Śiva is not different from Viṣṇu. The sects who worship Śiva are called Śaivites and the sects who worship Viṣṇu are called Vaiṣṇavites. There are differences between the followers which at times end in quarrel. Both Śiva and Viṣṇu, says the Lord, are one and the same and we should not be splitting hairs and fight.

The serpents are poisonous and are frightful creatures. They are said to live in the underworld. In Hinduism, even serpents are revered. We say that Lord Viṣṇu lies on the seven-headed serpent and Lord Śiva has a necklace of serpents around His neck (as an ornament). One can assume that poison does not affect divinity. (Poisonous actions of people also do not affect divinity.)

Arjuna saw the serpents also. He had learnt about various gods in his *gurukulāśrama*. He is now recognising them in the cosmic form. He also saw the *ṛṣi*s. He had learnt that the ancient seers gave the *Vedas* to the universe. Now, he has realised that they are also inside the Lord and are part of Him.

अनेकबाहूदरवक्त्रनेत्रं पश्यामि त्वां सर्वतोऽनन्तरूपम् ।
नान्तं न मध्यं न पुनस्तवादि पश्यामि विश्वेश्वर विश्वरूप ।।१६।।
aneka-bāhūdara-vaktra-netraṁ
***paśyāmi tvāṁ sarvato'nantarūpam* |**
nāntaṁ na madhyaṁ na punas tavā'diṁ
***paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa* ||16||**

I see thee, of boundless forms on every side, with manifold arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes; neither your end nor middle nor beginning do I see, O Lord of the Universe, O Cosmic Form

By giving this description, Arjuna is said to have overcome the 'space' problem. He can now see no space in the Cosmic Form. He can imagine fragments of the body in one form (like toys made of putty joined together into one lump showing parts of the toys in the mass). If he had seen arms, limbs separately, then that would mean there was space. This is not so. The outline of the limbs, stomach, etc. could be recognised in one mass by him.

The pictures we see of the Viśvarūpa, drawn by artists, is not really the true picture. The very fact that His form is beyond our comprehension, that He is formless and endless would make it impossible to picture Him. The artists have tried to give us as near a picture as possible taking Arjuna's description of the Cosmic Form.

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रिणं च तेजोराशिं सर्वतो दीप्तिमन्तम् ।
पश्यामि त्वां दुर्निरीक्ष्यं समन्ताद् दीप्तानलार्कद्युतिमप्रमेयम् ।।१७।।
kirīṭinaṁ gadinaṁ cakriṇaṁ ca
***tejorāśiṁ sarvato dīptimantam* |**
paśyāmi tvāṁ durnirīkṣyaṁ samantād
***dīptānalārkadyutim aprameyam* ||17||**

I see Thee, with crown, mace and discus, shining every-

where, a mass of radiance, dazzling the gaze, blazing like burning fire and sun and immeasurable.

samantād: All around.
dīptānalārkadyutim: Like burning fire and sun.
aprameyam: Immeasurable.

In Hinduism, we view the Lord as having a crown, holding a conch, a mace, a discus and a lotus in His hands, standing on the lotus flower and an aura of light behind Him. Arjuna has also been taught this and he saw them in the Cosmic Form. There is actually a significance in all these descriptions. The crown is usually worn by a king, an emperor. They wear it because they rule over their thousands of subjects. The Lord is the only ruler over all the senses which make the *jagat* for us. So, it represents the Lord as the ruler of the entire *jagat*.

The lotus-flower has a great importance in mythology. Most of our gods seem to be sitting or standing on it. Drops of water lie superficially on the lotus-leaf. There is no moisture on the lotus-leaf that comes out of the water. It means that though in the ocean of *saṁsāra,* (*jagat*), with innumerable changes taking place, the Lord is not affected by any changes. Changes are superficial like drops of water on the lotus, they fall off but do not moisten the leaf.

The conch is an instrument to blow. The blow of the conch is to be taken as 'call of duty'. The Lord asks everyone to do his duty. When unrighteousness dominates, the Lord will blow the conch. We are then supposed to remember to fight the battle. (The Kurukṣetra war would not start unless Bhīṣma blew his conch.) Also, the sound of the conch is supposed to frighten the unrighteous (enemy).

The mace and discus are actual weapons. If, the sound of the conch is not heard (taken notice of) He would bring His mace down and destroy evil. The generation of people at any time are supposed to uphold righteousness. People get killed, suffer illnesses, calamities occur. All of these are the result of the descending of the mace.

If we do not notice this action by the Lord and continue to be unrighteous or continue to turn a blind eye to unrighteousness, then, the Lord will send His discus and annihilate all. This is supposed to mean that *kala-cakra* (wheel of time) ever revolving will annihilate the world. *Pralaya* (destruction) of the world takes place.

We ruin ourselves by our actions. The Truth, primordial energy, the brilliant light of knowledge is ever shining. This is the radiance behind the picture of the Lord. This light, being above our faculty of perception, feeling and understanding, blinds us with its brilliance.

Arjuna ends the verse by saying that the cosmic form is *aprameya* (i.e., incomprehensible). Truth is not an object of perception by the intellect. The Self is the knower, feeler and perceiver. We cannot perceive, feel or know it by our physical body.

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।
त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषो मतो मे ॥१८॥

tvam akṣaraṁ paramaṁ veditavyaṁ
tvam asya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam |
tvam avyayaḥ śāśvata-dharma-goptā
sanātanas tvaṁ puruṣo mato me ||18||

Your are the imperishable Brahman, *worthy to be known. You are the foundation of this world. You are the protector of the eternal* Dharma. *In my opinion, You are the ancient* Puruṣa.

nidhānam: Treasure-house, foundation.

The *Veda*s describe *Brahman*, the imperishable. The ultimate knowledge to get from *Vedānta* is that *Brahman*, the Supreme, is imperishable. The whole world of objects and experiences we perceive through our sense-organs, mind, intellect is perishable. It keeps on going round the circle of birth and death with various modifications. The foundation for the birth of this jagat (*sṛṣṭi*) is the Lord and the *jagat* dissolves (*pralaya*) into the *Brahman* and the life-principle supporting the *jagat* (*sthiti*) is the Lord. Hence the Lord is the supreme foundation (treasure, house, *nidhānam*) of the universe.

The Lord is the supreme protector of *dharma*. The righetousness of any person depends on his conscience. If we analyse any action conscientiously, we will know whether it is right or wrong. Instead, we let our senses dictate to us and hence unrighteous actions take place. The Lord inside us all, is the *Puruṣa,* witness to all our actions. He is the conscious principle. If unrighteousness rules the world, He will incarnate with His yogic power and kill *adharma*. The world is still surviving because of a certain amount of morality left in the majority of us. Morality is rapidly declining. We must bring out our divinity inside us, join forces and uproot immorality. It is up to us to make the world a better place to live in.

The Lord is the seed of all creation. He is the ancient *Puruṣa*.

अनादिमध्यान्तमनन्तवीर्यमनन्तबाहु शशिसूर्यनेत्रम् ।
पश्यामि त्वां दीप्तहुताशवक्त्रं स्वतेजसा विश्वमिदं तपन्तम् ॥१९॥

anādi-madhyāntam ananta-vīryam
  ananta-bāhuṁ śaśi-sūrya-netram **।**
paśyāmi tvāṁ dīpta-hutāśa-vaktraṁ
  svatejasā viśvam idaṁ tapantam **॥19॥**

I see You without beginning, middle and end, infinite in power, of endless arms, sun and moon being your eyes, your mouth of burning fire, burning the whole universe with your radiance.

hutāśavaktram: Thy mouth of burning fire.
tapantam: Burning.

The Lord being infinite, really speaking, Arjuna could not have seen the beginning or end of the Cosmic Form. It is the painter's depiction, for us to imagine how great the Cosmic Form is, that we see the Cosmic Form of the Lord as a picture. There can be no such thing as the picture of the *viśvarūpa*.

The term 'endless arms' has a poetic tone to the scriptural meaning. One tends to describe a person's strength in relation to his arms. ''He is a strong-armed-person'' is a common saying. In this context, 'endless arms' signifies 'endless strength'. (If all of us together show our divinity (soul) in our external actions, we can be a strong force that can kill *adharma* and this is also a way of showing the Cosmic Form).

The sun and the moon are the cycle of one day in relation to day and night. The total of twenty-four hours are taken up by day and night. ''The time'' in those twenty four hours is sun and moon. In literary terms, 'the time' is the Lord.

Also, as eyes are for us to see, the ''principle of light'' is the essential 'principle' of the eyes. Without the light, one cannot see; in the absence of the light, eyes will not function as eyes. It signifies that the Lord is the 'total eye' of the universe. In their absence, we could not see anything at all. The world would be enveloped in total darkness.

The principal function of the mouth is speaking and eating. One tends to use the phrase ''burning speech'', to describe a great lecture. The 'speech of the total universe' is meant by the phrase ''burning fire in your mouth''. The Lord's radiance is so strong that the 'light' is burning in all of us.

द्यावापृथिव्योरिदमन्तरं हि व्याप्तं त्वयैकेन दिशश्च सर्वाः ।
दृष्ट्वाद्भुतं रूपमुग्रं तवेदं लोकत्रयं प्रव्यथितं महात्मन् ।।२०।।
dyāvāpṛthivyor idam antaraṁ hi
vyāptam tvayaikena diśaśca sarvāḥ |
dṛṣtvā dbhutaṁ rūpam ugraṁ tavedaṁ
lokatrayaṁ pravyathitaṁ mahātman ||20||

This space between heaven and earth and all the quarters is filled by You alone. Having seen this wonderful and terrible form, the three worlds are trembling with fear, O Mahātmā.

It is true that the Cosmic Form of the Lord is a wonderful sight but it must be terrible also for any one of us, the ordinary human beings. The blazing of a thousand suns at once, would frighten us. Absence of space between objects would frighten us. We have never experienced anything so vast without space breaking it up. According to Arjuna, even the inhabitants of heaven are trembling. They also had not seen this form.

> अमी हि त्वां सुरसङ्घा विशन्ति केचिद्भीताः प्राञ्जलयो गृणन्ति ।
> स्वस्तीत्युक्त्वा महर्षिसिद्धसङ्घाः स्तुवन्ति त्वां स्तुतिभिः
> पुष्कलाभिः ॥२१॥

> ***amī hi tvāṁ surasaṁghā viśanti***
> ***kecid bhītāḥ prāñjalayo gṛṇanti*** **|**
> ***svastīty uktvā maharṣi-sidhasaṁghāḥ***
> ***stuvanti tvāṁ stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ*** **||21||**

The hosts of devas *enter Thee, some in fear, with joined palms praise Thee, the bands of* ṛṣis *and* siddhas *praise You with sublime hymns by saying ''May it be well''.*

viśanti: Enter.
prāñjalayo: Folded hands.
gṛṇanti: Praise.
svasti: May it be well.

The term *surasaṅgha* has been interpreted by many as *deva*s. Those that are not *asura*s, are *sura*s. We can therefore say that there are a number of people entering into the Cosmic Form. Among those that are entering, some show fear in their faces, and some while showing fear in their faces also join hands in praise of the Lord.

This line of the verse is really a poetic description of death. The people entering into the Cosmic Form signify dying people (or destruction). It is human nature that when we face danger, automatically we ask for the Lord's help. This aspect is brought out in the phrase ''with joined palms praising Thee''. Those that are going to die, are praising the Lord.

*Ṛṣi*s and *siddha*s praise the Lord with the hymn *svasti*. *Ṛṣi*s and *ṣiddha*s are people of knowledge. They are not frighened of death. They understand that destruction will bring construction in its turn. Unrighteousness will die and a golden era of righteousness will follow if the Lord decides to reincarnate to kill evil. They therefore with a proper controlled mind, without fear, are saying *svasti*. *Svasti* is the prayer that signifies ''May it be well to all''. All spiritual teachers use this word in their prayers. The only thing they wish is 'universal welfare'.

रुद्रादित्या वसवो ये च साध्या विश्वेऽश्विनौ मरुतश्चोष्मपाश्च ।
गन्धर्वयक्षासुरसिद्धसङ्घा वीक्षन्ते त्वां विस्मिताश्चैव सर्वे ।।२२।।

rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā
viśve'śvinau marutaś coṣmapāś ca ।
gandharva-yakṣāsura-siddha-saṁghā
vīkṣante tvāṁ vismitāś caiva sarve ।।22।।

The Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus, Sādhyas, Viśvedevas, Aśvins, Maruts, Pitṛs and Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Asuras and Siddhas, all are loking at You with amazement.

ūṣmapāḥ: Pitṛs.

Among the names used here, only *sādhyas*, Viśvedevas and *ūṣmapās* have not been described before. (The rest are described in chapter 10.)

Sādhyas are a class of semi-divine celestial beings referred to in *Ṛgveda* (X, 99-15). They convey the devotee's prayers to the Lord and make it possible (*sādhya*) to fulfil the devotee's wish. Viśvedevas are sons of Viśvā, who is a daughter of Kaśyapa and are considered as 'minor gods'. *Ūṣmapās* are supposed to be 'heat drinkers'. Our dead ancestors (*pitṛs*) come during the annual *śrāddha* ceremony and enjoy the offerings made by us, their offspring. They accept the offerings only if they are hot. All these types of beings also are amazed at seeing the Cosmic Form.

रूपं महत्ते बहुवक्त्रनेत्रं महाबाहो बहुबाहूरुपादम् ।
बहूदरं बहुदंष्ट्राकरालं दृष्ट्वा लोकाः प्रव्यथितास्तथाऽहम् ।।२३।।

rūpaṁ mahat te bahu-vaktra-netraṁ
mahābāho bahu-bāhū-rūpādam ।
bahūdaraṁ bahu-daṁṣṭrākarālaṁ
dṛṣṭvā lokāḥ pravyathitās tathāham ॥23॥

O mighty-armed Kṛṣṇa, having seen your magnificent form, with many mouths and eyes, with many arms, thighs and feet, with many stomachs and fearful with many tusks, the worlds are terrified and so am I.

bahubāhūrūpādam: Many arms, thighs and feet.
pravyathitāḥ: Terrified.

As discussed before, the Cosmic Form has no space in between to differentiate different manifestations. Different parts of the body are seen as dots here and there. Such a picture is bound to terrify all. Arjuna confesses that he too is terrified.

नभःस्पृशं दीप्तमनेकवर्ण व्यात्ताननं दीप्तविशालनेत्रम् ।
दृष्ट्वा हि त्वां प्रव्यथितान्तरात्मा धृतिं न विन्दामि शमं च विष्णो ।।२४।।
nabhaḥ-spṛśaṁ dīptam aneka-varṇaṁ
vyāttānanaṁ dīpta-viśāla-netram ।
dṛṣṭvā hi tvāṁ pravyathitāntarātmā
dhṛtiṁ na vindāmi śamaṁ ca viṣṇo ॥24॥

Having seen Your Cosmic Form, touching the sky, flaming many colours, with mouth wide open, with large and fiery eyes, terrified at heart, I find either courage nor peace, O Viṣṇu.

nabhaḥspṛśam: Touching the sky.
vyāttānanam: With mouths wide open.
śamam: Peace.
na vindāmi: I do not find.

Arjuna has seen the form covering the entire speace from earth to the sky. Its mouth is wide open to swallow everything (i.e., signifying destruction). Arjuna is terrified at the sight of massive destruction in front of his eyes. Even though he is a strong kṣatriya, he cannot find peace on seeing this terrifying form.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is addressed as O Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, in mythological terms, means the God Viṣṇu, one of the Hindu trinity we know of. But, in this context it means something different.

During the *Vedic* period, the word Viṣṇu meant ''The one with long strides'', (with His long strides covering the infinite in three steps, Viṣṇu through the Vāmana *avatāra*, killed the demon Bali). As the Cosmic Form pervaded the entire universe, Arjuna uses the word Viṣṇu.

दंष्ट्राकरालानि च ते मुखानिदृ ष्ट्वैव कालानलसन्निभानि।
दिशो न जाने न लभे च शर्म प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ।।२५।।

daṁṣṭrākarālāni ca te mukhāni
dṛṣṭvaiva kālānala-sannibhāni |
diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma
prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa ||25||

Having seen Your mouths, horrid with tusks, blazing like the fire of pralaya, *I cannot see the four quarters, nor do I find peace. Be gracious, O Lord of the* devas, *abode of the universe.*

kālānala-sannibhāni: Blazing like fire of *pralaya*.
śarma: Peace.

Arjuna says that beholding the enveloping fire of destruction, he has lost his sense of direction, because here are no directions left for him to run away from the scene. Again he confesses that he is restless at the sight of destruction. As a sincere person, caring for universal welfare, Arjuna requests the Lord to be gracious and show mercy.

अमी च त्वां धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्राः सर्वे सहैवावनिपालसङ्घैः ।
भीष्मो द्रोणः सूतपुत्रस्थासौ सहास्मदीयैरपि योधमुख्यैः ।।२६।।

amī ca tvāṁ dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ
***sarve sahaivāvanipālasaṁghaiḥ* ।**
bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūtaputras tathāsau
***sahāsmadīyair api yodhamukhyaiḥ* ॥26॥**

वक्त्राणि ते त्वरमाणा विशन्ति दंष्ट्राकरालानि भयानकानि ।
केचिद्विलग्ना दशनान्तरेषु संदृश्यन्ते चूर्णितैरुत्तमाङ्गैः ॥२७॥

vaktrāṇi te tvaramāṇā viśanti
***daṁṣṭrākarālāni bhayānakāni* ।**
kecid vilagnā daśanāntareṣu
***saṁdṛśyante cūrṇitair uttamāṅgaiḥ* ॥27॥**

All the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, together with the hosts of kings of the earth, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, and with the chief warriors on our side;

enter into your mouths, with terrible teeth and fearful to see, some caught in the gaps between the teeth and found with their heads crushed into pulp.

avanipālasaṅghaih: With the hosts of kings of the earth.
asmadīyāh: Ours.
daśanāntareṣu: In the gates between the teeth.
vilagnāḥ: Sticking.

Arjuna is momentarily brought back to reality of the present war. He is seeing the future in the Cosmic Form. The Lord who is eternal and timeless is seen as the future in present'. There is no past, present or future for the Lord. It is we, with our limited minds who divide time into three segments. We have forgotten the past, are immersed in the present and do not know the future. (We do know that death comes sometime later but we do not want to think of it and also we dread such thoughts.)

Also, it is said that all the warriors ''enter into your mouth''. It means that in the course of time, the various manifestations that came out should also rush back whence they came. A knowledgable person, who realises the future in the present , will not be frightened of death. He understands the transient nature of the manifested world. This, in turn helps him to express his love (devotion) to the Lord. He becomes a *jñānī*.

यथा नदीनां बहवोऽम्बुवेगाः समुद्रमेवाभिमुखा द्रवन्ति ।
तथा तवामी नरलोकवीरा विशन्ति वक्त्राण्यभिविज्वलन्ति ।।२८।।

yathā nadīnāṁ bahavo'mbuvegāḥ
***samudram evā'bhimukhā dravanti* |**
tathā tavā'mī naralokavīrā
***viśanti vaktrāṇy abhivijvalanti* ||28||**

As the many currents of rivers flow towards the ocean, these warriors of the earth enter Your flaming mouths.

ambuvegaḥ: Water-currents.
abhivijvalanti: Flaming.
viśanti: Enter.

This verse has a beautiful meaning to it if we look into it and analyse it properly. Let us take the rivers first. Where did the water of the rivers originate from? The water from the ocean, absorbed by the sun, forming clouds, eventually pouring down as rain forms little pools and currents of water. These currents join together to become a river. The currents of water and rivers nourish the land in which they flow. Eventually, the river merges into the mighty ocean. Technically speaking, the drops came from the ocean and merged into the ocean. Drops joined together provided nourishment for plants, birds and animals and us, the humans.

Similarly, we come out like drops from the Lord, and go back into the Lord. In the process, we get a name and form. Name and form do not last long. They lose their identity in the course of time. So we, having come must serve the universe, nourish our culture and make the world a beauiful place to live in.

यथा प्रदीप्तं ज्वलनं पतङ्गा विशन्ति नाशाय समृद्धवेगाः।
तथैव नाशाय विशन्ति लोकास्तवापि वक्त्राणि समृद्धवेगाः ।।२९।।

yathā pradīptaṁ jvalanaṁ pataṅgā
***viśanti nāśāya samṛdhavegāḥ* |**
tathaiva nāśāya viśanti lokās
***tavāpi vaktrāṇi samṛdhavegāḥ* ||29||**

> *Just as moths rush into a blazing fire, for their own destrucion, with quickned speed, so also these creatures rush into Your flaming mouths for destruction.*

If we recollect, Arjuna did not want to fight the war, because of the terrible destruction it would cause. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has now amply shown to Arjuna that he, Arjuna, is not the person causing destruction. Destruction has to take place as a 'law of nature'. In that process, *adharma* has to die. A new generation of a peaceful co-existing world should emerge as a consequence of the destruction. Death as such is unavoidable.

लेलिह्यसे ग्रसमानः समन्ताल्लोकान्समग्रान्वदनैर्ज्वलद्भिः ।
तेजोभिरापूर्य जगत्समग्रं भासस्तवोग्राः प्रपतन्ति विष्णो ॥३०॥

lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāl
***lokān samagrān vadanair jvaladbhiḥ* |**
tejobhir āpūrya jagat samagraṁ
***bhāsas tavogrāḥ pratapanti viṣṇo* ||30||**

> *O Viṣṇu, devouring all the worlds on all sides with your flaming mouths, you lick; your fierce rays are burning with radiance filling the entire universe.*

This verse brings out the destructive force of Lord Viṣṇu. Arjuna sees the Lord having mouths on all sides and everywhere he observes the Lord licking his mouth.

There is a subtle poetic beauty in his verse. We eat several times a day and we eat from the time of our birth till our death. When we really enojoy what we eat, we lick our lips. Does it mean that the Lord is enjoying the process of destruction? Yes, he is. In Hindu religion, we have the concept of the Trinity, composed of Brahmā, the creator, Śiva, the destroyer and Viṣṇu, the sustainer. The three deities represent the three aspects of the Supreme *Brahman*. Creation, sustenance and destruction together play a role in the continuity of the universe. Destruction is to be looked upon as a change from one form to another. The majority of us have not reached the stage of *jīvanmuktas*. Our *vāsanā*s are not exhausted in this existence. Our physical death releases the subtle body which in course of time combines with the five elements and forms a new life.

Also, we know that according to the law of physics, no two objects can occupy the same place at the same time. If there was not death, this, our Universe, would have collapsed. There should be room for new entrants into the universe. This aspect of the Lord is fulfilling one task of maintaining the universe. The Lord is pleased of the part well done and so he is shown to be licking his lips.

Seeing this aspect of destruction, Arjuna grows blind as it were, on account of the fierce radiance that is emanating from the Lord's face.

आख्याहि मे को भवानुग्ररूपो नमोऽस्तु ते देववर प्रसीद ।
विज्ञातुमिच्छामि भवन्तमाद्यं न हि प्रजानामि तव प्रवृत्तिम् ।।३१।।

ākhyāhi me ko bhavān ugrarūpo
namo'stu te devavara prasīda |
vijñātum icchāmi bhavantam ādyaṁ
na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim ||31||

Tell Me, who you are, so fierce in form! Salutations to you, O God Supreme, have mercy. I desire to know You, the Original Being, I know not Your action.

Arjuna after seeing the Cosmic Form is bewildered at such a sight. He has seen a terrifying sight and knows the future. But he sitll wants to hear from the Lord's own mouth the purpose of the terrible form. He is begging for mercy from the Lord of Destruction. He had understood the Lord as ''the supporter of the universe'' but now suddenly he sees the Lord as ''the destroyer''.

श्रीभगवानुवाच

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत्प्रवृद्धो लोकान् समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः।
ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ।।३२।।

śrī bhagavān uvāca
kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛdho
***lokān samāhartum iha pravṛttaḥ* ।**
ṛte'pi tvāṁ na bhaviṣyanti sarve
***ye'vasthitāḥ pratyanīkeṣu yodhāḥ* ॥32॥**

The Lord said

I am Time, world-destroying and mighty, now engaged in destroying the world; even without you, these warriors in hostile armies shall not live.

pravṛddhaḥ: Mighty.
samāhartum: To destroy.
pravṛttaḥ: Engaged.
pratyanīkeṣu: In the hostile armies.
ṛte'pi: Even without.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is asserting the well-known dictum: "Time consumes everything". Man is, as they say in Sanskrit, "*nimitta-mātra*". He is just an instrument in the hands of the mighty, powerful force called 'Time'. The Lord says that 'He', the Lord is 'Time'.

Why should one worship destruction? Destruction, as we discussed before, is a pre-requisite for construction. Nothing is permanent when compared to 'Time'. Evil has to be rooted out to be replaced with seeds of *dharma*. *Dharma* has to sprout and grow into a mighty tree to give shelter to the various manifestations of beings. Arjuna, the Lord says, should not think that by his running away from the battlefield all the other warriors will be saved. They may stay an extra day or two before Time consumes them. "Even without you" the Lord stresses.

तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्ष्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।
मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वम् एव निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ।।३३।।
tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva
***jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyaṁ samṛdham* ।**
mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva
***nimittamātraṁ bhava savyasācin* ॥33॥**

> *Therefore, stand up and obtain glory. Conquer the enemies and enjoy the flourishing kingdom. Verily, by me they have already been killed. Be you a mere instrument O left-handed archer.*

The Lord has said in chapter 3, verse 27, ''*ahaṁkāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate*''. The ego in man, makes him feel that he has achieved what result one has obtained. What are we in comparison to the Lord? We sow the seeds and feel great that we have grown the healthy crops. After all, we put a few grams of seeds. We make use of natural resources like water, sunshine and minerals to grow the crops. We gave tender care during their growth. We did not invent the crops. Man's invention is nothing but what is already in the universe but not manifest. Penicillin was not something we got from nowhere. We used our brains to grow it from 'mould'.

The Lord tells Arjuna to carry out that which has already taken place in the mighty ocean of Time and to enjoy the flourishing kingdom. With unrighteousness killed, *dharma* will flourish and people will live happily.

द्रोणं च भीष्मं च जयद्रथं च कर्णं तथान्यानपि योधवीरान् ।
मया हतांस्त्वं जहि मा व्यथिष्ठा युध्यस्व जेतासि रणे सपत्नान् ॥३४॥

droṇaṁ ca bhīṣmaṁ ca jayadrathaṁ ca
karṇaṁ tathā'nyān api yodhavīrān |
mayā hatāṁs tvaṁ jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā
yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān ||34||

Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karṇa and other brave warriors—these have already been slain by Me. You do kill them. Be not distressed with fear. Fight and you shall conquer the enemies.

jahi: Do kill.
mā vyathiṣṭhā: Do not be distressed with fear.
sapatnān: The enemies.

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The verse is an important one for all of us to remember in our battle of life.

Arjuna was in war. Among the opponents, were: (1) Droṇa his teacher, who was more powerful and had plenty of magical divine weapons. (2) Bhīṣma had a boon by his father that he will die only at his wish. Nobody could slay him. (3) Jayadratha's father was in *tapas*. As long as he was in *tapas*, anybody who makes his son's head fall to the ground will suffer. The killer's head will break into a thousand pieces. (4) Karṇa had received special weapons from the sun's blessings. If Arjuna wanted victory, he had to work out as to how to kill these four, apart from other warriors. Without killing them, he would not win. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells him that these four are going to be killed in war and Pāṇḍavas would win the war. He has become a gypsy as it were, who foretells the future by looking through the crystal glass of Time.

''Do not be afraid (*mā vyathiṣṭhāh*) and do fight (*yudhyasva*)'' is the Lord's command. He says *jetāsi* (you will conquer). Śrī Kṛṣṇa repeatedly has emphasised that fearlessness, courage and righteous action are the main instruments to fight any battle.

Once we know that 'Time' consumes everything, why should we fear anything? We know that we, our loved ones and others, have to die sooner or later. Knowing it, why should we be frightened of death and loss of company? The duty for mankind is not to give up work out of fear. Our duties are already prescribed by *śāstras*. We have to perform our duties. This way we will win, i.e., we will get fruits of our actions. This is His promise to all. Fight the battle of life righteously and enjoy the rewards.

सञ्जय उवाच
एतच्छ्रुत्वा वचनं केशवस्य कृताञ्जलिर्वेपमानः किरीटी ।
नमस्कृत्वा भूय एवाह कृष्णं सगद्गदं भीतभीतः प्रणम्य ॥३५॥

sañjaya uvāca
etac chrutvā vacanaṁ keśavasya
  kṛtāñjalir vepamānaḥ kirīṭī **|**
namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇaṁ
  sagadgadaṁ bhītabhītaḥ praṇamya **||35||**

Sañjaya said

Having heard that speech of Kṛṣṇa, the crowned one (Arjuna), with joined palms, trembling, prostrating himself, again addressed Kṛṣṇa, in a choked voice, bowing down, overwhelmed with fear.

अर्जुन उवाच
स्थाने हृषीकेश तव प्रकीर्त्या जगत्प्रहृष्यत्यनुरज्यते च।
रक्षांसि भीतानि दिशो द्रवन्ति सर्वे नमस्यन्ति च सिद्धसंघाः ।।३६।।

arjuna uvāca
sthāne hṛṣikeśa tava prakīrtyā
jagat prahṛṣyaty anurajyate ca |
rakṣāṁsi bhītāni diśo dravanti
sarve namasyanti ca siddhasaṁghāḥ ||36||

Arjuna said

It is but meet O Kṛṣṇa that the world delights and rejoices in your praise. The rākṣasas *run in fear to all quarters, and all hosts of* siddhas *bow to you.*

anurajyate: Rejoices.
sthāne: It is meet.

This and the next ten verses are poetically very beautiful. They are often sung together when groups of devotees meet.

Tava prakīrtyā: means "In Thy praise". We should all be joining together in praise of the Lord. We could do it in a number of ways: (a) prayers, (b) discussions, (c) lectures, (d) in our everyday actions we should bring divinity.

कस्माच्च ते न नमेरन्महात्मन् गरीयसे ब्रह्मणोऽप्यादिकर्त्रे ।
अनन्त देवेश जगन्निवास त्वमक्षरं सदसत्तत्परं यत् ।।३७।।

kasmāc ca te na nameran mahātman
garīyase brahmaṇopy ādikartre |
ananta deveśa jagannivāsa
tvam akṣaraṁ sad asat tatparaṁ yat ||37||

> *And why should they not bow down to You,O Great-sould one? Greater than Brahmā even, the primal cause. O infinite Lord, Lord of gods, abode of the universe, thou art imperishable. Being and non-being, and what is Supreme, that thou art.*

> *garīyase*: Greater.
> *kasmāt*: Why?
> *nameran*: Prostrate.

Arjuna now accepts that the Lord is even higher than Brahmā, the Creator. He is Lord of all gods and the universe is only a part of Him. We *alpātmā*s think that the universe is great and we have great power in this universe. It is a false notion because the Lord is the controller of all that happens in this universe and beyond.

Sad asat tat param: *Sat* and *asat* have been given different contradictory meanings by different commentators. But the ultimate meaning of the whole sentence is the same.

(1) *Sat* : Truth. "We are the souls" is the truth.
Asat : False. "We are the body" is false.

Tat param: 'That' Supreme, i.e., *Paramātmā* into which all merge eventually.

Another interpretation is:

(2) *Sat* : What we see.
Asat : What we do not see.

The manifest world of objects appreciated at physical, mental and intellectual levels is *sat*. *Asat* is unmanifest. We all have *vāsanā*s which have to manifest sooner or later. At present they are not manifest.

Tat param: The Lord is above both the *sat* and *asat*. Without this pure knowledge (awareness) we cannot understand either the manifest or the unmanifest.

The meaning and significance of the *mahāvakya 'tat tvam asi'* is brought out in this prayer of Arjuna.

त्वमादिदेवः पुरुषः पुराणस्त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।
वेत्तासि वेद्यं च परं च धाम त्वया ततं विश्वमनन्तरूप ॥३८॥

tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas
  tvam asya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam **|**
vettāsi vedyaṁ ca paraṁ ca dhāma
  tvayā tataṁ viśvam anantarūpa **||38||**

Thou art the Primal God, the most ancient Puruṣa, *You are the supreme refuge of this universe. You are the Knower, the Knowable and the Abode Supreme. By You, the universe is pervaded, O Being of infinite forms.*

vettā: Knower.
vedyam: Which is to be know.

If someone asks who is *Paramātmā*, here is the answer.

He is: (1) The Primal God. He is the Supreme Creator. Even *apara-brahma* the four-headed creator has come from the Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness, (primordial energy) had a desire to create and the entire phenomenon is the play or *līlā* of the Lord.

(2) Because of (1) He is the ancient *Puruṣa*. He is the seer (*dṛk*). He is a witness to all our actions.

(3) The foundation of the world (*tvamasya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam*). *Viśva* is the total world of experience at physical, mental and intellectual levels. Pure Consciousness (supreme knowledge) illumines the world of experience. Had it not been for Pure Consciousness, we could not experience the *viśva*. Hence He is called the foundation of the universe.

(4) Supreme Abode (*param ca dhāma*): Even though the Lord is considered the seed of all. 'The Seed' does not perish to become the universe. The Seed remains changeless, whereas all our experiences (*viśva*) come and go and change their pattern.

(5) As He is a witness to all our actions, He is also called 'omniscient' (all knower; *vettā*).

(6) *Vedyam ca*: 'We', who came from Him and have to go back to Him, is the one who is knowable. Once we know that

we are not our physical body, that we are but part of Him, then we are said to have known 'the Truth.' There is no other knowledge greater than the knowledge of *Paramātmā*. We should know the full significance of *tat tvam asi.*

(7) He is omnipotent. He pervades all and is all-powerful. There is nothing in the world that pervades Him. 'We', the physical body, are not pervading Him. When we say that the Lord is inside us all, it does not mean 'we pervade Him'. We, the physical body are only products of *māyā*, the 'perishable'. We are not there but we live thinking we are there surrounding the Lord inside us.

(8) *Viśvarūpa:* Everything we see in the world is Him. If we can develop the eye of knowledge, we can see *sat cit ānanda* everywhere and we shall not see *'nāma* or *rūpa'*.

वायुर्यमोऽग्निर्वरुणः शशाङ्कःप्रजापतिस्त्वं प्रपितामहश्च ।
नमो नमस्तेऽस्तु सहस्रकृत्वः पुनश्च भूयोऽपि नमो नमस्ते ।।३९।।

vāyur yamo'agnir varuṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ
  prajāpatis tvaṁ prapitāmahaś ca **|**
namo namaste'stu sahasrakṛtvaḥ
  punaśca bhūyo'pi namo namaste **||39||**

You are Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuṇa the moon Prajāpati and the Great Grandsire of all. Salutations, salutations to you again and again and once again salutations, a thousand times salutations to you.

Upāsanā is a form of meditation on the Supreme. In *Vedic* times, it was held that the best form of *upāsanā* was meditation on the sacred *mantra Oṁ*. In *Vedic* times, there was no concept of God with name and form, such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, etc. They believed that all creation was at the behest of the Supreme *Brahman* and of His free will through the media of Brahmā—the Creator—as Prajāpati. Again in *Vedic* times, prayers were, apart from *Brahman,* on natural phenomenal powers. They were Vāyu (wind), Yama (destroyer), Agni (fire), Varuṇa (water), Śaśāṅka (moon). None of them had any form. Arjuna therefore, mentions the names of the forces that were the deities to meditate upon during his time.

Existence of different gods came into vogue during the *Purāṇic* period. By looking at the verse, one can see that Arjuna has now spiritually matured and is climbing up the spiritual ladder very fast. He now recognises that all the various gods mentioned above are nothing but the Lord Himself. We all invoke the Lord of our hearts, like Viṣṇu, Īśvara, Dattātreya etc. As a matter of fact, we should remember that the 'Lord of our heart' is also the same as the Lord of others' hearts though with a different name and form. Arjuna, in ecstasy praises this 'Lord of all Lords'.

नमः पुरस्तादथ पृष्ठतस्ते नमोऽस्तु ते सर्वत एव सर्व ।
अनन्तवीर्यामितविक्रमस्त्वं सर्वं समाप्नोषि ततोऽसि सर्वः ॥४०॥

namaḥ purastād atha pṛṣṭhatas te
***namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva* ।**
ananta-vīryāmita-vikramas tvaṁ
***sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi tato'si sarvaḥ* ॥40॥**

Salutations to You, before and behind. Salutations to You on all sides. O All, You infinite in power, and infinite in strength, pervade all. Wherefore You are all.

purastāt: Before
pṛṣṭhataḥ: Behind.
anantavīryāmitavikramaḥ: Boundless in power, measureless in strength.

This verse expatiates on the nature of the infiniteness of the Lord. He was present in the past, is present now and will be present in the future. He is almighty and pervades all. We are nothing in power and position; we have whatever we have, as His manifestation. We should constantly keep this thought in mind and meditate on Him if we want liberation.

सखेति मत्वा प्रसभं यदुक्तं हे कृष्ण हे यादव हे सखेति ।
अजानता महिमानं तवेदं मया प्रमादात् प्रणयेन वापि ॥४१॥

sakhe'ti matvā prasabhaṁ yad uktaṁ
***he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti* |**
ajānatā mahimānaṁ tavedaṁ
***mayā pramādāt praṇayena vā'pi* ||41||**

Whatever I have presumptuously said out of carelessness or love, addressing You as O Kṛṣṇa, O Yādava, O friend, and regarding You as a friend only, not knowing Your greatness;

यच्चावहासार्थमसत्कृतोऽसि विहारशय्यासनभोजनेषु ।
एकोऽथवाप्यच्युत तत्समक्षं तत्क्षामये त्वामहमप्रमेयम् ।।४२।।

yac cāvahāsārtham asatkṛto'si
***vihāra-śayyāsana-bhojaneṣu* |**
eko'thavāpy acyuta tat samakṣaṁ
***tat kṣāmaye tvām aham aprameyam* ||42||**

In whatever way I may have disrespected You for the sake of fun, while at play, resting, sitting at meals, when alone in company with You—all that I implore You to forgive, O You immeasurable one.

pramādāt: Carelessness.
praṇayena vāpi: Even due to love.
prasabham: Presumptuously.
asatkṛtaḥ: Disrespected.
aprameyam: Immeasurable.
kṣāmaye: Ask to forgive.

Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa were very close friends. They spend a lot of time together. They played together many games and ate meals together several times. In other words, they were intimate friends. Intimacy automatically leads one to drop all formalities. Intimate friends address each other in the singular in our Indian languages. No great words to praise the other person are used.

Suddenly, on realising the greatness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is none other than the 'Lord Supreme', all the thoughts of his previous intimacy went through Arjuna's mind. He therefore does what any gentleman would do. He recollected his mistakes done due to intimacy and also ignorance of his friend's true nature. He sincerely asks for forgiveness.

It is true that Arjuna did not commit any mistakes. After all he did not know until now the true nature of his friend.

पितासि लोकस्य चराचरस्य त्वमस्य पूज्यश्च गुरुर्गरीयान् ।
न त्वत्समोऽस्त्यभ्यधिकः कुतोऽन्यो लोकत्रयेऽप्यप्रतिमप्रभाव ।।४३।।

pitāsi lokasya carācarasya
***tvam asya pūjyaśca gurur garīyān* ।**
na tvatsamo'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto 'nyo
***lokatraye'py apratima-prabhāva* ।।43।।**

You are the father of this world, the moving and unmoving. You are the greatest guru. Equal to You there is none. How can there be then another, superior to You in the three worlds? O God of unequalled power.

garīyān: Greatest.

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the one who has given us the *Gītā* is the greatest teacher, *jagadguru.* He made the great *Veda*s very simple and has shown us by His practical way the path of action towards *mokṣa*. Arjuna, realising the eternal nature of the Lord knows that there is nothing moving or unmoving in this world which is greater than the Supreme Lord. If we take refuge in the *Gītā*, taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa, we will cerntainly attain *mokṣa*.

तस्मात्प्रणम्य प्रणिधाय कायंड्प्रसादये त्वामहमीशमीड्यम् ।
पितेव पुत्रस्य सखेव सख्युः प्रियः प्रियायार्हसि देव सोढुम् ।।४४।।

tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṁ
***prasādaye tvām aham īśam īḍyam* ।**
piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ
***priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum* ।।44।।**

Therefore bowing down and prostrating, I crave Your forgiveness, O adorable Lord. As a father forgives his son, a *friend his friend, a lover his beloved, You should forgive me.*

soḍhum: Bear

In Hinduism, prostrating in front of the idol of the Lord, parents, teachers and elders is a form of reverence shown to the Higher. 'I am little in front of You', is the feeling expressed. This is called *sāṣṭāṅga vandanam.*

This action has to be supported by the proper mental attitude implied by it also. The reverence shown must come from our mental, intellectual plane. In the immediate presence of the Lord, the feeling should be: 'this physical body is not mine, it is false, I bow to you my Lord'.

This surrender must come with a spirit of love. Lovingly, one must prostrate before the Lord, apologising for all one's mistakes due to one's false identification with the physical body. Arjuna requests for forgiveness for all his mistakes in relation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whom he thought as a mere friend and behaved like a friend.

Just like the son, out of love and respect for his father, goes and asks for sincere forgiveness, Arjuna requests Kṛṣṇa to excuse him. Arjuna requests further to excuse him just like a true friend would forgive his friend or a lover would forgive his beloved one.

अदृष्टपूर्वं हृषितोऽस्मि दृष्ट्वा भयेन च प्रव्यथितं मनो मे ।
तदेव मे दर्शय देव रूपं प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ॥४५॥

adṛṣṭapūrvaṁ hṛṣito'smi dṛṣṭvā
   ***bhayena ca pravyathitaṁ mano me* |**
tad eva me darśaya deva rūpaṁ
   ***prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa* ||45||**

I am delighted having seen what was never seen before. And my mind is distressed with fear. Show me Your former form only. O God, have mercy. O Lord of gods, abode of the universe.

pravyathitam: Distressed.

Arjuna could not stand the sight of the cosmic form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He did enjoy the sight. He had not seen or dreamt of this form of his friend before. As Kṛṣṇa said in *śloka* 32 of this chapter (*kālosmi lokakṣayakṛtpravṛddho*), Kṛṣṇa, the Lord had assumed that form to destroy the worlds. On behalf of all, Arjuna is asking for mercy. Excuse our sins my Lord, He is saying. I do not want to see the form of destruction, it is frightening. Please assume your original form, Arjuna is pleading with the Lord.

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रहस्तमिच्छामि त्वां द्रष्टुमहं तथैव ।
तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन सहस्रबाहो भव विश्वमूर्ते ।।४६।।
kirīṭinaṁ gadinaṁ cakrahastam
icchāmi tvāṁ draṣṭum ahaṁ tathaiva **।**
tenai'va rūpeṇa caturbhujena
sahasrabāho bhava viśvamūrte **।।46।।**

I desire to see You as before, with crown, mace and a discus, in Your former four-armed form only, O thousand-armed, universal form.

Arjuna had read the *Veda*s and *Purāṇa*s in his earlier days. He was taught by his teachers that Lord Viṣṇu is four-armed (carrying a lotus, mace, conch and discus in each of the arms) with a crown and a bright glow surrounding Him. He was said to be all merciful and protector of the universe.

Now having known that the same Lord Viṣṇu is the one with *viśvarūpa* form, intent on destroying the worlds, Arjuna prefers the form of Lord Viṣṇu instead of *viśvarūpa*. He prefers to behold the Lord, the protector, to Lord, the Destroyer.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
मया प्रसन्नेन तवार्जुनेदं रूपं परं दर्शितमात्मयोगात् ।
तेजोमयं विश्वमनन्तमाद्यं यन्मे त्वदन्येन न दृष्टपूर्वम् ।।४७।।
śrī bhagavān uvāca
mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṁ
rūpaṁ paraṁ darśitam ātmayogāt **।**

tejomayaṁ viśvam anantam ādyaṁ
  yan me tvadanyena na dṛṣṭapūrvam **||47||**

The Lord said

O Arjuna, this Supreme form has been shown to You graciously by My sovereign yoga *— full or radiance, primeval, infinite, universal form which has never been seen before by anyone other than you.*

No one in the past, in their moment of despair, had seen this cosmic form of the Lord. Arjuna, at his moment of despair however had the balance of mind to approach his *guru* and pray for guidance. He wanted to know what was the right action he had to take.

Several great men of the past had certainly achieved *mokṣa*. They got absorbed into the *Paramātmā* but had not seen the *viśvarūpa*. Arjuna, the Blessed One was the most fortunate to have seen it.

It is said that Śrī Kṛṣṇa had shown this form to king Dhṛtarāṣṭra during His peace-mission. But, unfortunately it was of no avail as Dhṛtarāṣṭra did not realise the Form. He was so attached to his sons that his mind did not accept anything else. To all intents and purposes, that attempt was infructuous because it was not recognised.

न वेदयज्ञाध्ययनैर्न दानैर्न च क्रियाभिर्न तपोभिरूग्रैः ।
एवंरूपः शक्य अहं नृलोके द्रष्टुं त्वदन्येन कुरुप्रवीर ॥४८॥

na vedayajñādhyayanair na dānair
  na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ **|**
evaṁrūpaḥ śakya ahaṁ nṛloke
  draṣṭuṁ tvadanyena kurupravīra **||48||**

Neither by the study of the Vedas, *nor by sacrifices, nor by rituals, nor by severe* tapas, *I have been seen in this form in the world of men except You, O Arjuna, hero of the Kurus.*

Great men of the past by the study of *Vedas*, by *yajñas*, by *tapas* have achieved liberation. They are therefore good paths to take to achieve 'oneness' with the Lord. As such people have merged into the Lord, they have not actully seen the cosmic form. Arjuna, by the Lord's grace managed to see the form.

It would be wrong if one were to misunderstand this verse. It does not mean that there is no point in studying the *Veda*s or performing *yajña*s or *tapas*. They are essential for purification of one's mind. It means that one should be able to visualise and understand the meaning of vi*śvarūpa*.

मा ते व्यथा मा च विमूढभावो दृष्ट्वा रूपं घोरमीदृङ् ममेदम्।
व्यपेतभीः प्रीतमनाः पुनस्त्वं तदेव मे रूपमिदं प्रपश्य ।।४९।।

mā te vyathā mā ca vimūḍhabhāvo
  ***dṛṣṭvā rūpaṁ ghoram īdṛṅ mamedam* |**
vyapetabhīḥ prītamanāḥ punas tvaṁ
  ***tad eva me rūpam idaṁ prapaśya* ||49||**

Do not be afraid and bewildered on seeing My cosmic form. Free from fear and with gladdened heart, behold again this former form.

vyapetabhīḥ: Free from fear.

सञ्जय उवाच
इत्यर्जुनं वासुदेवस्तथोक्त्वा स्वकं रूपं दर्शयामास भूयः ।
आश्वासयामास च भीतमेनं भूत्वा पुनः सौम्यवपुर्महात्मा ।।५०।।

sañjaya uvāca
ity arjunaṁ vāsudevas tatho'ktvā
  ***svakaṁ rūpaṁ darśayāmāsa bhūyaḥ* |**
āśvāsayāmāsa ca bhītam enaṁ
  ***bhūtvā punaḥ saumyavapur mahātmā* ||50||**

Sañjaya said

Having thus spoken to Arjuna, Vāsudeva shows His own form again. And the great-souled Lord, having assumed His gentle form, consoled him who was so terrified.

bhūyaḥ: Again.

From *viśvarūpa* to the Lord-the-Protector form and finally back to the incarnated human form was shown to Arjuna. This form of the gentle, familiar friend Kṛṣṇa was taken finally to come back to reality. He now consoles Arjuna who was terrified and requested the Lord-of-Destruction to become Lord-of-Mercy.

अर्जुन उवाच
दृष्ट्वेदं मानुषं रूपं तव सौम्यं जनार्दन ।
इदानीमस्मि संवृत्तः सचेताः प्रकृतिं गतः ।।५१।।

arjuna uvāca
dṛṣṭvedaṁ mānuṣaṁ rūpaṁ tava saumyaṁ janārdana |
idānīm asmi saṁvṛttaḥ sacetāḥ prakṛtiṁ gataḥ ||51||

Arjuna said

O Kṛṣṇa, having seen Your gentle human form, I am now composed and restored to my natural state.

sacetāḥ: Of calm mind.
īdānīm: Now.
saṁvṛttaḥ: Have become.

With the special eye-of-knowledge, Arjuna was taken to a state of mind where he could transcend all levels or planes of consciousness and see 'all-in-one', the Absolute Truth. He is now brought back to the physical level of existence and he could communicate with his friend, teacher and guide more freely.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
सुदुर्दर्शमिदं रूपं दृष्टवानसि यन्मम ।
देवा अप्यस्य रूपस्य नित्यं दर्शनकाङ्क्षिणः ।।५२।।

śrī bhagavān uvāca
sudurdarśam idaṁ rūpaṁ dṛṣṭavān asi yan mama |
devā apy asya rūpasya nityaṁ darśana-kāṅkṣiṇaḥ ||52||

The Lord said

This form of Mine which you have seen is very hard indeed to see. Even the gods are desirous of beholding this form.

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।
शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ।।५३।।
nāhaṁ vedair na tapasā na dānena na cejyayā |
śakya evaṁvidho draṣṭuṁ dṛṣṭavān asi māṁ yathā ||53||

This form of Mine, which you have seen, is not possible to see either by Vedas, *or by austerity, or by gift, or by sacrifices.*

ijyayā: By sacrifice.

These two verses are a re-assertion of what has been said in verses 47 and 48 of this chapter.

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ।।५४।।
bhaktyā tv ananyayā śakya aham evaṁvidho'rjuna |
jñātuṁ draṣṭuṁ ca tattvena praveṣṭuṁ ca parantapa ||54||

O Arjuna, by single-minded devotion, can I, of this form be 'known' and 'seen' in reality and also 'entered into', O Parantapa.

Having said that even *deva*s cannot see the cosmic form nor by reading of the *Veda*s, giving gifts, performing sacrifices, one can see the cosmic form, Śrī Kṛṣṇa immediately comes back to assert as to how one can still attain *mokṣa*.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa does no want the followers of the spiritual path to turn around and go back thinking 'what is the use of this hard work anyway?' Also, the great poet and real teacher is introducing the theme of the next chapter *bhakti-yoga*.

Bhakti is devotion. In our day-to-day life we are devoted to someone or the other. This could be one's husband or wife, parents, children, friends, etc. Devotion is the measure of fixation with a loved one. The couple devoted to each other act as though they are one, and not two people. The happiness of the one is the happiness of the other also. If the devoted person is suffering, the other person feels the suffering himself/herself. A mother feels all the pains which her child suffers.

Devotion to the Lord means identifying with the Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "to understand me and enter into Me, you must have *ananyā bhakti*." *Ananyā bhakti* means *bhakti* in only one (i.e., the Lord). Single-pointed devotion is the only way to understand the Lord and attain liberation.

The greatest scientists are sometimes considered as eccentrics because of their single-pointed devotion to their work. By their dedication they achieve great results which help mankind (by scientific discoveries). Similarly, according to the greatest teacher, to see ''Him in this fashion'' (*viśvarūpa*), the person has to be an *ananya bhakta*.

This realisation of the Greatest Truth comes in stages and this verse brings out the stages beautifully in three steps.

(1) **Jñātum:** To be known. Before starting on any journey one should know where to go, how to go, and why one should go. This is not easy. It might be a far off place which one has not seen yet. One should be determined to achieve the goal of reaching the end of the journey. This is *dvaita*, i.e., you and me are two different entities. But I express my total devotion to you. I have decided to move to a new house. I have in my mind the exact type of house I want. I have come to know that there is a house exactly to fit my needs, desires and mental picture. I then enquire in detail about this house. I have so far not seen the house but I have fallen in love with it by what I have heard so far, I am planning to move from this house because I am not happy in this house for various reasons.

Similarly, the first step also needs a higher intellectual development. One must have experienced life and at the same time have an idea about God, scriptures etc. It means, during childhood we should develop some form of *bhakti* to God. We should also develop moral virtues from advice by parents, teachers and elders. We all look for happiness in life which, we come to realise, is not permanent when we get it. Either we want more of it or we find worries following happiness from what we get. We then look for higher levels of satisfaction. We start to realise that there is God, the all-protecor, the friend in need. This is the first step to be known (*jñātum*). The God is coming nearer (*sāmīpya*).

(2) Draṣṭum (to be seen): Continuing the last example, after preparing for the journey, one travels and reaches the new place. I have now gone and seen the new dream-house I want to move into. This is coming face to face with the object of devotion. In *jñātum*, the object of devotion was not clear; it was far away. In *draṣṭum*, the object is right in front. What was *dvaita* (two) is now *viśiṣṭa advaita* (qualified *advaita*). At this level the object of devotion is really seen in front of you. By hard spiritual practice, the seeker has risen intellectually to a higher level of maturity. What he was reading or listening to is now getting clearer. He is getting to know it better. He can visualise God in himself and others. But he is still a separate entity. His ego is still showing. This stage of vision of God is called *sārūpya*. One has no doubt about the existence of the Lord. From 'nearness', one has reached the stage of 'vision' of the Lord.

(3) Praveṣṭum: To enter into. Continuing the old example, one has not only reached the station, but has taken the transport and reched the place he intended and planned to reach. I have bought the new dream-house and entered into it. As far as I am concerned there are no two entities now. I am inside the new house. This is *advaita,* the non-dual form. The devotee, having attained Self-realisation, has dropped his ego and toally unites with the Lord. He is a *jīvanmukta*. He has achieved *mokṣa*. He has reached the stage of happiness which is permanent. Nothing in the material world upsets him any more. He is ever content. There is no difference between him and the Lord. He has attained union with the Lord. This state is called *sāyujya*. He has detached himself from the false and attached himself to the Real, and experienced the Truth. He may not have seen the cosmic form, but has achieved the final 'Goal'. This *advaita* philosophy is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is teaching the mankind through the *Gītā*.

Our body is compared to a fortress and inside the fort lives the king who is our *ātman*. The king lives inside the palace though he may not be seen by all. Presuming that the king is inside, the people carry on their duties. This is *jnatum* aspect wherein one knows that the king is there. This is *dvaita*.

There are some subjects who may go to the palace and have a nearer view of the king. This is the *draṣṭum* aspect. The king is seen with one's own eyes. This is *viśiṣṭa advaita* or qualified monism. Very few persons, like the queen and the children of the king and the chief minister, will have direct communication with the king. They have permission to enter the royal chamber and communicate with the king. This is the *praveṣṭum* aspect in which one has "not only seen, but has also entered into". This is *advaita* or non-dualism. Listening to discussion on God is good, seeing him is better and seeing, communicating and being part of Him is he best.

By *ananyā bhakti*, the devotee can go through the three stages and attain liberation. The culmination of divine love is total identification with the god. Of course we should also realise that it is not seeing the God with our physical eyes. As we have discussed before, it is seeing Him with our intellect, i.e., with the intellectual eye.

Arjuna wanted to see the Lord in His effulgent original form (as mentioned in *vibhūti-yoga*). The reality of truth is seeing the truth in its totality. The Lord is beautiful, merciful and truthful. But he is also fierce. He has also the element of the power of destruction in him. Arjuna therefore had to see the destructive aspect of the Lord in this universal vision. (Of course, human nature being what it is, we cannot bear the vision of horrible destruction. Hence, Arjuna requests the Lord to assume His *saumya* or the calm and peaceful aspect.)

मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ।।५५।।

matkarmakṛn matparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ **|**
nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava **||55||**

O Arjuna, he who does actions for Me only, who looks upon me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment, who has no enmity to any being, he attains Me.

It is easy acquiring material objects by following the above three steps. Comparatively it is not easy to achieve liberation. The Lord is now giving practical advice of how to go on to achieve the 'final goal'

matkarmakṛt : *Karmayoga*
matparamaḥ : *Dhyānayoga*
madbhaktaḥ : *Bhaktiyoga*
saṅgavivarjitaḥ : *Jñānayoga*

The Lord has given the medicines for the ailments of 'life'. Any of the four medicines would cure; but along with medicines, one should also follow the diet to help the medicines to work. This diet is: *nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu*, without enmity for any being, compassion for all beings.

Matkarmakṛt: One should perform all actions dedicated to the Lord. *Kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu* should be the attitude of any action undertaken. Work should be worship. Selfless actions, welfare of the community, not looking for fruits of action should be the way to perform our day-to-day work.

Matparamaḥ: One should accept the Lord as one's final refuge. He is the greatest. Nothing else in the world can match up to his greatness. Instead of pursuing worldly objects, one should meditate on the Lord and attain *mokṣa*. *Jagat* is *mithyā,* i.e., the world is unreal, God is real.

Madbhaktaḥ: Total devotion to the Lord is another path which is taken up in the next chapter. In this spirit all work can be considered as devotion to the Lord. The paths intermingle so much that one cannot be dogmatic on the path one decides to follow.

Saṅgavivarjitaḥ: By study of the *Veda*s after freeing oneself from all attachments, by studying the scriptures, and through knowledge obtained from scholars, one develops detachment from body and the material world. Even while one is engaged in day-to-day activity, one should still be able to detach himself from the pluralistic world and to get attached to 'true knowledge'. He is a *jñānī*. He is capable of discrimination between the 'real' and 'unreal'.

Nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu: When one is achieving union then one should know that the same 'One' is in 'all'; there should not be any feeling of enmity. Attachment and visualisation at body-level give two separate entities. If one realises that he is the 'Self' and sees the 'Self' in all, the actions of others is immaterial. At the same time, one may ask how to deal with such people who behave badly. The first point to remember is not to consider the other person as enemy. In spiritual development, we have not become masters yet. So, the way would be to develop 'no attachment' to physical actions of such a person. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that everyone has to uplift himself. He could have told Arjuna straigh away to fight but he did not. Arjuna had a desire to know 'the Truth' and he approached Him for it.

Giving something away to one who does not ask for it, will not achieve anything. Knowledge also should be given to those who want it. Trying to teach the enemy the right action will not achieve any results. One would be wasting precious time.

Hence, universal love is the theme of the Lord. In *advaita* philosophy, the universe is one. All the different materials and objects are like different parts of the same body. Harm done to others is like harming our own body. Love for all and hatred to none is the aim towards realistion of 'the Truth'. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya declares that this verse is to be considered as the essence of the *Gītā*.

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे विश्वरूपदर्शनयोगो नाम एकादशोऽध्यायः॥
iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ yogaśāstre
śrīkṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde viśvarūpa-darśanayogo
nāma ekādaśo'dhyāyaḥ II

CHAPTER 12

BHAKTI-YOGA

Bhakti means 'devotion', or worship. It originates from the root *bhaj* which means adoration or loving devotion. *Bhakti* also means 'to share, to partake, to enjoy'.

In the last two chapters Arjuna has realised the 'all-in-one' aspect of the Lord. In his earlier days of *Vedic* learning, Arjuna has adopted the method of contemplating on *Brahman*, the formless through *upāsanā*. Meditating on *OṀ* represents the earliest form of contemplation on the Supreme.

It is not easy to meditate on the formless. Our senses dominate us so much that we live in the world of senses. We see things, we feel things, we smell and hear things. 'Seeing is believing' we say. So, in the *Purāṇic* period, the same formless *Brahman* came to be represented in different forms. Contemplating on a particular form of *Brahman* became much easier and this path was called *bhakti-mārga*.

The *Brahman* with form was easy to be represented in the form of an idol. Seeing the idol would remind one of *Brahman*, the formless. Idol-worship, as it is called, is *bhakti-mārga*. Arjuna, after seeing the cosmic form is perplexed. He wants to know how anyone should worship the Lord? How can one, by idol-worship, swing his mind away and turn it into the infinite? What is the proper technique of *bhakti-yoga* wherein one can merge with the Infinite? This chapter deals with that technique. One can ask why this path is brought so late in the *Gītā*. The answer would be thus:

Arjuna first of all had to know about *ātman* or soul. By gradual steps, he was taken through the chapters leading to the cosmic form. Only on seeing the cosmic form, Arjuna was convinced that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was none other than the *Brahman*. His mind is tuned to adoration on the 'Manifested Lord'. The more one knows about a person, the love for that person gets stronger.

Arjuna's mind is properly tuned to understand *bhakti* now. He had practical experience of the 'Unmanifested Form of *Brahman*' through the medium of *Viśvarūpa.*

अर्जुन उवाच
एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥१॥

arjuna uvāca
evaṁ satatayuktā ye bhaktās tvāṁ paryupāsate |
ye cāpy akṣaram avyaktaṁ teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāḥ ||1||

Arjuna said

Thus, those devotees who ever steadfast worship You, and also those who medidate on the Unmanifest Imperishable Brahman—which of them are better in yoga?

yogavittamāḥ: Are supurior knowers of *yoga.*
Brahman, the Supreme, can be worshipped as:

(1) *Brahman* without form and without any attributes. This is known as *nirguṇopāsanā.* He is beyond the perception of sense-organs and as such *avyakta*, also known as *indriya-agocara.*

(2) *Brahman* with form and attributes (i.e., Viṣṇu, Śiva, etc.). This is known as *saguṇopāsanā.* As this form can be perceived by the sense-organs, it is *vyakta* or manifest form.

To meditate on the Unmanifest, one has to go beyond sense-organs. To meditate on the Manifest, one can engage the sense-organs (by concentrating on the form represented by idol). Arjuna wants to know, which of the two is the better method. He was a *kṣatriya*, a man of action. So, he wants to know what is the right way to do anything.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥२॥

śrī bhagavān uvāca
mayy āveśya mano ye māṁ nityayuktā upāsate |
śraddhayā parayopetās te me yuktatamā matāḥ ||2||

The Lord said

Those who have fixed their mind on Me, steadfast in their devotion, endowed with the supreme faith, those in My opinion, are the best of the yogīs.

āveśya: Established,
upetāḥ: Endowed.

The Lord does not give a straightforward reply. If He had given a clear reply, there would not have been any problems at all. Because there are different paths to reach God, automatically different groups of people are formed. Each group will try to support its own as the best path. They forget that the final goal achieved is the same for all. The path taken will usually depend on the mental make-up of the person. The end-result being 'self-development', it does not matter which path one takes.

To go from point 'A' to point 'B' which is on the other side of a canal, one can walk around, one can swim, can use a boat or can use a vehicle to go around it. If one has the means for any one of these, it is possible to reach the destination. For a swimmer it is easy to swim. For a cyclist, it is easy to go on the bicycle. For an athletic person, it is easy to run or walk. Everybody would support his own path.

So, Lord Kṛṣṇa is not saying whether it is *saguṇa* or *nirguṇa* form of worship which is superior. He puts forward three qualities essential for devotion. They are:

(1) Establishing the mind in the Lord: *mayyāveśya*
(2) Ever thinking of Him: *nityayuktāḥ*
(3) Having firm faith in the Lord: *śraddhyā upetāḥ*

(1) The mind should be established in the Lord. It could be on the Unmanifest or Manifest form of the Lord.

Our minds are full of thoughts on various aspects. Thoughts are preludes to our actions. Divine thoughts should develop more and more. They should get stronger and stronger. Just thinking of God is not enough. The thoughts should merge into what one is contemplating (*āveśya*). This process is called 'thought-penetration' into the divine.

(2) Continuing the last quality, our sense-organs constantly send in impulses during the wakeful state and our mind reacts to them. During sleep, the mind can still wander around in the 'land of memory'.

This distraction should not be there during 'thought-penetration' on the Lord. No external or internal new thought-generation should take place. This is *nityayuktatā*. This process is 'self-control'. Self-control is nothing but an art to keep the thoughts balanced at the point of concentration. In a lecture class, unless one concentrates totally on what the teacher is teaching, one cannot fully or perfectly understand the subject. There should be proper self-control at that time. Similarly, in contemplation on the Lord, self-control is essential.

(3) Unless we have faith in what we are doing, we will not succeed. *Śraddhā* is not just blind belief. *Śraddhā* is belief in something which we do not know, but which we would want to know.

A pilot who wants to fly, must go through with *śraddhā* in both the theoretical and practical course of flying. He should have total dedication to become a pilot.

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥३॥

ye tv akṣaram anirdeśyam avyaktaṁ paryupāsate |
sarvatragam acintyaṁ ca kūṭastham acalaṁ dhruvam ||3||

Those who worship the Imperishable, the Indefinable, the Unmanifest, the Omnipresent, the Immovable and the Eternal;

संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥४॥

saṁniyamyendriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ |
te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ ||4||

Having restrained all the sense, even-minded everywhere, rejoicing ever in the welfare of all beings — verily they attain Me.

anirdeśyam: Indefinable.
kūṭastham: Changeless.
indriyagrāmam: Aggregate of senses.

These two verses are for worship on the formless (*nirguṇa* or unmanifest) *Brahman.* Even though He has no attributes, to grasp His nature one has to compare Him with attributes we know. Only then is it possible to meditate. It is not easy to concentrate on something 'blank'.

The third *śloka* deals with the non-attributes and the fourth *śloka* deals with qualities necessary for the seeker for realising the *nirguṇa Brahman.*

He is: **Akṣara:** Imperishable.

Anirdeśya: Indefinable. What is beyond perception cannot be defined.

Avyakta: Unmanifest. Not perceptible to the senses.

Acintya: Unthinkable. He is beyond thought.

Kūṭastha: He is changeless. The Self, the consciousness remains unchanged. All our thoughts and actions change and modify with consciousness as the foundation.

Sarvatraga: All-pervading.

Acala: Immovable. That which has no shape cannot move. Shape is in proportion to the space occupied by any object in a particular place. If the Lord is all-pervading, then He has no shape and so He cannot move. The immovable objects like the mountains do not come in this category. In course of time they also move (our geologists confirm it). The Lord is past, present and future.

Dhruva: He is Eternal. Our consciousness, the life-principle is the same now, it was same in early days and will remain so in the future. The Lord is the ruler of time.

The three qualities necessary for self-realisation are:

(1) complete self-restraint: *saṁniyamya indriyagrāmam;*
(2) equal-mindedness: *samabuddhi;*
(3) universal love: *sarvabhūtahita.*

(1) Unless, all the sense-organs and mind are restrained, it is impossible to meditate on *Brahman.* Our energies instead of being diverted into the world-of-plurality must be concentrated on the path of the divine.

(2) After being born in this world, we have to go through various modifications in us and in our surroundings. We cannot have one state of existence to remain permanently. We cannot stay in a happy or sorrowful state permanently in relation to our contact with the physical world. All our experiences are temporary in relation to Time.

To concentrate on the Lord, in our various experiences in life is *samabuddhi*. This state is 'intellectual equanimity'.

(3) Universal love is stressed by the Lord always. As shown in the cosmic form, (all-in-one) we are all 'One-in-Him'. We must therefore 'love' all. After all, we are living in this world and come into contact with various manifestations in the world. We cannot shut ourselves away permanently. Because of this, developing universal love is stressed by the Lord. Such a person will reach 'Me alone' (*māṁ prāpnuvanti*), the Lord says. It is the qualities in the person that help him to reach the Lord and not the form one meditates upon.

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥५॥
kleśo'dhikataras teṣām avyaktāsaktacetasām |
avyaktā hi gatir duḥkhaṁ dehavadbhir avāpyate ||5||

Greater is the difficulty for those whose minds are set on the realisation of the Unmanifest, because the Unmanifested is reached with very great difficulty by embodied beings.

avyaktāsaktacetasām: Who aspire for unmanifested *Brahman.*

dehavadbhiḥ: By the embodied beings.
avāpyate: is reached.

This verse, if not taken in total, and its meaning analysed properly, can be interpreted wrongly. It is difficult to contemplate on the Formless, is the meaning of the first half of the verse. The second half of the verse elaborates on the first half. It says that it is difficult for embodied beings. We are all embodied beings, aren't we? Then does it mean, 'Meditation on the Formless' is easy for the person after death?

We have therefore to understand that embodied beings are those, who have still got attachment to their physical bodies. "Their minds and sense-organs are not totally under their control", would be the meaning of the word 'embodied beings'. For those who have not acquired purity of mind, contemplation on the Formless would be difficult.

Another interpretation would be as follows:

Embodied beings are those who have egotistic attachment to their physical bodies. Their *aham* (I-ness) is not eradicated totally. In other words, it means that for the majority of us, the path to meditate would be on the 'manifest' of the Lord (*saguṇopāsanā*).

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥६॥

***ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparāḥ* |**
***ananyenaiva yogena māṁ dhyāyanta upāsate* ||6||**

But those who worship Me, renounce all actions in Me, regard Me as the Supreme Goal, worship Me with single-minded devotion and dhyāna;

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि नचिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥७॥

***teṣām ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsāra-sāgarāt* |**
***bhavāmi nacirāt pārtha mayy āveśita-cetasām* ||7||**

> *to those with minds set upon Me, verily, O Arjuna, I become the saviour and lift them up from the ocean of death and* saṁsāra.

The first verse gives the path to follow for meditation on the 'manifested form'.

The definite conditions are:

(1) renouncing all actions in the Lord;
(2) considering the Lord as the Supreme Goal;
(3) worshipping the Lord with unswerving devotion.

'Renouncing all actions', means dropping the ego. "I am doing the Lord's work, it is not for my personal pleasure, it is not for my personal gains", that should be the spirit in which any action is undertaken. What we talk, think and express should be on one and only one, namely 'The Lord'.

Once we aim at achieving something, if we really want it, we have to sacrifice other pleasures. A boxer, for example, sacrifices his craving to eat and sleep as he wants, to attain the necessary weight to qualify for boxing and hoping to win the competition. If our aim is 'The Supreme Goal', to achieve liberation, we should automatically think of 'our aim' in all our actions. 'Am I going to be in the right path by doing this?', is what we should question ourselves. Whatever we think and act should be analysed first. If it is going to distract us from our path, we must drop it. Self-perfection is therefore hard but not impossible to achieve.

Ananyenaiva yogena: *Yoga* is union with *ātmā*. Any path taken towards that aim should be followed with an undivided mind. We must learn to lift ourselves from the day-to-day agitations of our minds and direct our minds towards the Lord.

To strive for the Lord is *yoga*. To strive for bodily enjoyments is *bhoga*. *Ananya-yoga* means we should keep our goal the same all the time.

Māṁ dhyāyanta upāsate: "Me alone meditating, worship". It is no use by simply worshipping without understanding. Repeating the name of 'Rāma' a thousand times without understanding is of much lesser value, compared to contemplating only a few times on 'Rāma' with real understanding. Who is Rāma, what did He show in His life? What do we learn from His actions, is what we should contemplate upon. The more we do this way, the more we like Him. We get more devotion and in turn we try to follow the truthful way He lived. We therefore can uplift ourselves by our actions which we follow on thinking and meditating on the idol of our choice.

Seeing an idol of Kṛṣṇa should remind one to correct any mistakes in one's actions. Thinking of Kṛṣṇa, one should correct any mistakes in his actions. This is really the meaning of this sentence. Kṛṣṇa performed the greatest *niṣkāma karma* and has set an example for all of us to follow.

What would one get by following this advice? The Lord assures that He will lift them up from the ocean of *mṛtyu-saṁsāra.* The *saṁsāra* is like an ocean with deadly dragons like *kāma*, *krodha* etc. It will bring unhappiness by attachment to the physical body and its contact with the material world.

The Lord says He will confer liberation on those whose mind are set on Him. As we know, our minds can be turned outwards to the world of sensuality and inwards to the world of divinity. The focal point therefore is 'the mind'. If we can control it, we will overcome all the unhappiness in this world and achieve '*sat, cit* and *ānanda*'.

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥८॥
mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya |
nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ ||8||

Fix your mind on Me only. Place the intellect in Me; thereafter you shall no doubt, live in Me only.

ādhatsva: Fix firmly.
niveśaya: Place.
ata ūrdhvam: Thereafter.

Meditation, in the form of *bhakti-yoga*, is described in this verse. Meditation is a process by which one tries to unite with what he is contemplating. Our physical body is made up of: (1) sense-organs, (2) the mind, (3) the intellect. We perceive anything at these three levels of our gross and subtle body. If we are to contemplate on any one object, to achieve success in it, there must be harmony between the subtle and the gross bodies.

The first step the Lord says is to fix one's mind on the Lord. By this action both sense-organs and the mind are brought together. Mind being the master over sense-organs, fixing the mind automatically controls the sense-organs.

By meditating on any form of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa the flute-player, little boy Kṛṣṇa stealing butter, Kṛṣṇa stealing *gopī*s, clothes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaching *Gītā*) our mind can be easily brought to rest at the feet of the form we contemplate. Love for Kṛṣṇa in the form we want, will make that meditation more easy. The mind will control the sense-organs and will not respond to other impulses they might bring which would distract it.

The second step is to place the intellect in the Lord. What is intellect? It is the reasoning faculty in us, the humans. It is commonly known as *buddhi*. The mind will think but the intellect will decide. It will say whether what we think is right or wrong. If we follow what our intellect says, our right thinking would reflect in our actions. By placing our reasoning in the Lord (i.e., divine, moral, righteous) our meditation on the Lord becomes more fruitful. We will enjoy total bliss. By using our intellectual faculty, we must go deeper than the idol and realise the truth it represents. Our intellect enjoys the company of Kṛṣṇa we are meditating upon, our mind enjoys thinking on Kṛṣṇa and our sense-organs follow our mind and intellect. Single-pointed love towards the idol of our choice will then make it easy for us to live in the Lord only. '*Na saṁśayaḥ*', the Lord says, 'no doubt whatever'.

By "living in God" is meant 'living in good virtues', and not doing anything evil. This is pure living. When the mind is pure it is easy to live in God.

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय ॥९॥

atha cittaṁ samādhātuṁ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram |
abhyāsa-yogena tato mām icchāptuṁ dhanañjaya ||9||

If you are unable to fix your mind firmly in Me, then by the 'yoga-of-constant practice' try to reach Me, O Dhanañjaya.

In chapter 6, verse 35, the Lord said *abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate* (subdue the wandering mind by constant practice and detachment). The reason why we cannot fix our mind on the Lord constantly is due to the wandering nature of our mind. We know that the mind is full of agitations, caused by various desires and plans. It is impossible to control it overnight. We all know ''Practice maketh one perfect''. There is no other way.

In our childhood days, when we had to learn the alphabet and numerals, we all went through the same problem. We did not learn them in one day. Our parents gave us a chalk and slate (pen and paper) and made us write and say repeatedly what we were writing. We also know that our minds were wandering towards games (or sweets, etc.) but, by constant practice we achieved learning the basic lessons. The alphabet and numerals, by constant practice, have become our second nature. Our speech is the follow up to the alphabet only.

Similarly, developing more love for God would help to bring back the mind towards contemplation on the Lord. For this, our intellect has to function properly and we must let our intellect be the master over the mind. Disciplining the mind to contemplate on the Lord is extremely important and discipline can be had by constant practice.

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव ।
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन्सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि ॥१०॥

abhyāse'py asamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava |
madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi ||10||

> *Even if you are unable to practise* abhyāsa-yoga, *do work for My sake; even by doing actions for My sake, you shall attain perfection.*

The fact that we are born as humans, with the power of reasoning, means that we have some divine seeds in our intellect. Due to our previous *vāsanā*s, we may not find it easy to let the seeds grow and the seeds may remain dormant. We do know that different seeds bloom at different times. Under favourable conditions the seeds bloom. A full bloom of divine flowers will express as divine actions of such persons. There is a fragrance of divinity in such a person.

Meditation as described in the previous verses is a favourable condition for the divine seeds to blossom. Because of their *vāsanā*s, some people may not find it easy to meditate. Why some, the majority of us are of this type. Our minds are full of *vāsanā*-imprints which get us attached to the objects around us. Our actions are connected to the world of plurality.

The Lord is giving us a simple method of burning these *vāsanā*s and replacing them with divine *vāsanā*s. He says ''Work for my sake''. What does it mean? Good actions, charitable work, *japa*, vows of fasting and silence, etc. are actions for the sake of God. For these actions to take place, we must think first. We must have a desire for it. We will, therefore, develop divine desires in course of time. These divine *vāsanā*s will hopefully outnumber other *vāsanā*s. We should look upon ourselves as agents of the Lord. The Lord's purpose is making sure that divinity and morality are abundantly available to all of us and we, the agents, should distribute it. The rewards we get will depend on our performance. The highest reward *mokṣa*, will be like getting the post of Director of the Company, because by *mokṣa* we will become one with God. An agent, selling a product for a company, goes to the shopkeeper and says ''our products we will guarantee, we will supply etc.'' He is identifying himself with the company. The stronger his identification, the greater will be his dedication. His reward will be promotion to posts like sales-executive, manager, etc. One day, he may become a Director. Very few people achieve this status.

Similarly, the Lord says, ''work for My sake and you will attain perfection which will lead you towards *mokṣa*. Act as part of a team, not as a separate individual'', is the Lord's guidance to us.

> अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।
> सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥११॥
> ***athaitad apy aśakto'si kartuṁ madyogam āśritaḥ* |**
> ***sarva-karmaphala-tyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān* ॥11॥**
>
> *If you are unable to do even this, then taking refuge in Me, self-controlled, renounce the fruits of all actions.*

As we have discussed earlier, the fruits of any action are to be regarded as seeds of our future. Do not live in the future, do not be a day-dreamer is its meaning. Act now, for the present put your total dedication in your efforts and this is enough to bring a reward in course of time. Maximum efficiency in present actions is the Lord's advice.

Can we not see it in present-day society? Are not the industrialists saying ''We will reward for work-efficiency." They say, ''do not expect pay raises automatically." This is because most of us are working for getting the wage packet rather than deserving it.

We must develop the spirit of *kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu* in all our actions. Let us all buy the seeds of divinity, plant them in our intellect, give them water, sunshine and manure. Let us take away the weeds of bad instincts. Lo and behold, we will develop the blossom of divinity in us in course of time. If we are lazy, buy the seeds, plant them and think that one day they will blossom and we will become divine (attain *mokṣa*), then we are living in a dream-world. We must act now and do what is needed today and we must act tomorrow when tomorrow comes.

For performing this type of work also, self-control (*yatātmavān*) is necessary. If we cannot control our senses, the weeds of unrighteousness will grow luxuriantly and will not give a chance for the divine seeds to blossom. Let us constantly remember God while engaged in our activities and let us surrender the fruits of action to Him all the time.

> श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासात् ज्ञानाद् ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।
> ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥१२॥
> ***śreyo hī jñānam abhyāsāt jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate |***
> ***dhyānāt karmaphala-tyāgas tyāgāc chāntir anantaram ||12||***
>
> *Knowledge is indeed better than practice, meditation is better than knowledge, renunciation of fruits of action is better than meditation. Immediately after renunciation, peace is attained.*

Here *jñāna* means knowledge obtained from the books. By reading the scriptures, by listening to *guru*s and elders, we acquire some knowledge of divinity and morality. If we work with this knowledge, the result will be that much more rewarding when compared to just practising. In other words, there is no use simply doing the rituals without actually knowing their significance. Hence the adage 'knowledge is better than practice'.

Dhyāna (meditation) is meditating on the knowledge obtained. One gets wisdom by this method. Wisdom is better than knowledge because a wise man is one who has experienced the knowledge. By *dhyāna* we convert our learning into understanding through practical experience. We must know what the *śāstra*s say, why they say it and what happens if we do not do what the *śāstra*s say. If we meditate on what has happened in our life so far, we will be able to realise our past ignorance of *śāstra*s.

Karma-phala-tyāga is better than meditation. This applies to the majority of us. We find it hard to meditate or read scriptures. If we attempt those paths, we do not get satisfaction. Our minds are so filled with *vāsanā*s that we might fail if we force ourselves to follow these paths.

If we follow the simple rule *kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu*, we can be at peace. We find peace in our work. *Karma-phala-tyāga* is expressed as *tyāga* in this verse. *Tyāga* is better than *dhyāna*. By *tyāga* our minds get pure. When we develop purity of mind and heart, realisation of the 'Supreme' is easy. We will feel a sense of peace when we dedicate our acts to the Lord. ''Why should we worry, he will take care of everything'' will be our attitude. When we go to the doctor with full faith, we find that we get a state of peace in ourselves. We feel we have unburdened ourselves to him and he will get us better. Similarly, if we surrender to the Lord with full faith, He will lift us out of the ocean of *saṁsāra.*

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥१३॥
adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca |
nirmamo nirahaṁkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī ||13||

संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥१४॥
saṁtuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ |
mayy arpita manobuddhir yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||14||

He who does not hate any being, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egotism, who is equal-minded in sorrow and pleasure, and forbearing; who is ever contended, steady in meditation, self-controlled, firm in conviction, who has surrendered his mind and intellect in Me, he My bhakta *is dear to Me.*

In this and the next five verses, a total of thirty-five virtues of a true *bhakta* are mentioned. A true devotee must possess all those virtues. There is no such thing as God being partial to so and so. He is equal in His love to all. Any true aspirant should analyse himself and see if he has any of those qualities. He should strive to develop the qualities which he has not got. These virtues are not meant to test others. They are only for self-perfection.

In the 2nd chapter a description of *sthitaprajña* (man of steady wisdom) was given. In this chapter are given virtues of a man of perfection.

Adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām: There should be no hatred towards any being. A true *bhakta* will see the Lord in all and hence he has no hatred to anyone.

Maitraḥ: He is friendly. Any person who approaches the devotee, will be received with friendliness. Again this is because the devotee sees the Lord in him.

The idea in putting these two virtues together is to make one realise that there is no mention of wicked people. If a wicked person comes to the devotee, he is also received as a friend. A devotee does not hate any person. But, he would not go out and try to convert the wicked person. He is indifferent to the wicked person but will not stop him from coming to see him. A wicked person must know that he is wicked and try to change himself. One cannot go and change the other person's character unless the other person is aware of his own evil nature and wants to change it.

Karuṇaḥ: He is compassionate to all living creatures. He is also compassionate to all people irrespective of their caste and religion and sex. He is compassionate even towards a man of sin. He understands that the person who commits sin is an ignorant man, and feels sorry for him.

Nirmamaḥ: He has no such feeling of me and mine. There is no trace of selfishness. He sees God in all. He shares his love with all.

Nirahaṅkārah: He is not egotistic. He does not consider his virtues as great and does not pat his own back. He does not feel proud of what he possesses but he is always on the lookout for virtues he does not possess. He will try to uplift himself but not with any sense of pride.

Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ: He is equal-minded in pain and pleasure. For him the only pleasure is *ātmānanada*. He is content with his *ātmā*. As nothing else brings him happiness, he has no sorrows to feel. As we discussed earlier, happiness and pain are only a state of the mind. He takes pains and pleasures as temporary phenomenon affecting the physical body. Any pain has to end sooner or later. This would include terminal pain. Death is a release from pain and he is not frightened of death. He knows similarly that there is no such thing as total happiness from material objects. Such happiness is relative to the time only. Some may last a few minutes and some may last for many days. (Even the happiness of passing one's exams has to end so that one has to get on with his day-to-day work).

Kṣamī: He has the noble quality of forgiving others. If a sinner sincerely comes to him and says 'sorry', he will accept it and excuse him. He realises that the sinful act was done by the ignorant man (physical body) and not the real man (Self).

Santuṣṭaḥ satatam: He is always contented. He does not feel unhappy if he does not get a particular object. He is content with what he got or what he has. Under no circumstances does he feel discontented with himself or with the world.

Yogī: He is steady in meditation on the Lord. He constantly remembers his beloved Lord. His mind has the least agitations arising from the external world.

Yatātmā: He is self-controlled. His sense-organs and mind are always under the control of his conscience.

Dṛḍhaniścayaḥ: His conviction is firm. He knows the true nature of the Lord. His faith in the Lord is unshakable. Even during times of stressful situations (with health or wealth) he does not lose his faith in the Lord. A true test of any devotee is his intense faith in the Lord even at crucial moments of his life.

Mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ: His mind and intellect are always absorbed in the Lord. As intellect is our highest level of perception, if it is absorbed in *bhakti*, all our actions reflect *bhakti*.

Such a devotee is dear to Me, the Lord says.

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥१५॥

yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ |
***harṣāmarṣabhayodvegair mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ* ||15||**

From whom the world has no fear, and who has no fear from the world, who is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety —he is dear to Me.

Three more virtues of a *bhakta* are mentioned in this verse. Nobody in the world would ever be frightened of a true devotee. A devotee is not there to take anything from anybody. We are all frightend that we may lose what we have but as a devotee does not take anything away, no one will be frightened of him.

Similarly, the devotee has no fear from the world. He has nothing to lose. He has no feeling of 'I' and 'mine' and is not attached to any material possessions. In other words, he is fearless. He is free from inward agitations like joy, envy, fear and anxiety. He is calm in all circumstances. His mind maintains equanimity at all times. His mind is only absorbed in contemplation on the Lord.

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥१६॥
***anapekṣaḥ śucir dakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ* |**
***sarvārambha-parityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ* ||16||**

He who is free from wants (desires), who is pure, alert, who is unconcerned, untroubled, who is selfless in all undertakings, who is devoted to Me, is dear to Me.

gatavyathaḥ: Untroubled, Free from sorrow.
sarvārambhaparityāgi: Removing all senses of doership in all actions.

Six more qualities of a *bhakta* that would please the Lord are given in this verse.

Anapekṣaḥ: He is free from desires. His sense-organs and mind are under constant control; nothing from the outer world would tempt him. His mind is not agitated and does not aspire to get the objects of temptation. His mind is so calm and peaceful in contemplation on the Lord that it has shut off all the windows of sense-organs. The best devotee is one who has developed his love to he Lord so much that he has no desire even to obtain the Lord. He is immersed in and has identified himself with the Lord. He draws inspiration and joy from a deep source within himself.

Ordinarily, we get peace and joy on getting an object from the outer world which is the right type of object for us and it is in the right way as we wanted. Unfortunately, that peace and joy do not last long. We either go for more of the same or go for something better than the previous object of desire.

We see mangoes in summer, we really feel thrilled on seeing the first batch of mangoes sold on the street. We eat one and want another one. Some of us eat a basketful of mangoes for the first time. After sometime we feel we had had enough and cannot get joy and peace anymore. We might even get 'upset tummies'.

He is śuciḥ: Pure. A devotee's thoughts and actions are pure and *sāttvika*. He constantly keeps his mind clean. Normally we get dirty physically from: (a) atmosphere and surroundings in the outer world and (b) excretions from our own body. To clean ourselves we go to the toilet and have a bath. But still the dirt accumulates. We therefore clean ourselves daily. Wherever possible, we try to avoid getting dirt on us physically.

Similarly, the dirt in our mind comes from impulses of *tamas* and *rajas* from our sense-organs and by our mind inwardly contemplating on the objects that bring (momentary) pleasures. We accumulate dirt in our mind everyday. To wash it daily by devotion and meditation is essential.

A true *bhakta* does not let any dirt pollute his mind. His mind does not react to external impulses and does not dwell on pleasures. His mind is always pure. A true *bhakta*, keeps his external appearance clean. Even his relationship with his surroundings is also clean. He is *śuciḥ* all round.

Dakṣaḥ: Constantly alert. A momentary lapse is enough for us to slide down. We should be on guard, guarding our souls constantly. We should not let our pure soul get any taint of imperfection near it. Enthusiasm to achieve something can be converted to success of achieving it if we keep alertness as our second nature. There is no *tāmasika* nature in a true devotee. We know that in any field of activity, if we want to reach the goal, we must be alert and avoid laziness, idleness. A vocalist, who has reached great heights is constantly on the alert about his voice. The food he eats and the beverage he drinks, the cold atmosphere he exposes himself to, would bring changes in his voice. His livelihood depends on his voice and so he guards his voice always. A doctor is constantly on guard in treating his patients. A momentary lapse would harm the patient or ruin his own career. He must follow the code of practice constantly.

Māyā in various ways is round the corner to pull the devotee down. We know the story of sage Viśvāmitra, and how often he slipped down in his path to become a *brahmarṣi*. Indra tried to stop him from becoming *brahmarṣi*. For every temptation he succumbed to in his path, he had to spend years and years in austerity to attain perfection. Our *sādhanā* to be a true devotee must include alertness in all our actions, at all times.

Udāsīna: Unconcerned. A true devotee is not concerned as to what happens to his body and mind. He accepts all illnesses, diseases to his body or to the bodies of his beloved ones as something natural which happens sometimes or the other in life. He will arrange to provide the necessary treatment which is in his capacity. He will do all he can to treat such conditions. He does not show any fear, anxiety or agitation in such events. He will accept the outcome that nature produces despite his efforts. He will do his duty to his family to provide proper treatment. Death has no fear for him. His own death or the death of beloved ones does not affect him. Similarly, if he receives any praise or criticism justly or unjustly, he does not get concerned. He would have done what he did according to his conscience and he does not get elated or depressed at the outcome of his actions. He does his work properly and does not look for results. He continues in his field of work irrespective of the results, but always works according to his true conscience.

Arjuna was expected to be unconcerned about the deaths of a number of soldiers in the war including his own family and friends. An act done properly may not be judged by others correctly. One cannot please all, but one should always please one's conscience. Then criticism from others will not affect the future work in that field.

Gatavyathaḥ: One should not let his mind get agitated with fear or sorrow. Once we take refuge in the Lord, nothing in the world should bring fear or sorrow to us. The ocean of our mind should not let fear and sorrow bring in waves. What is it that brings fear and sorrow? Desire brings them. When we want something, we are frightened as to what happens if we do not get it. We are also frightend about losing it once we get it. We feel worried if we do not get it or if we lose it. Our mind thinks on various ways about the objects of desire that before we know, our path to *mokṣa* is diverted. We will fall into the ditches in our path. Nothing should make us frightened or depressed.

Sarvārambhaparityāgī: *Ārambha* means beginning. *Sarvārambha* means all beginning. *Tyāga* is renunciation. This phrase needs a closer analysis. 'Beginning' always brings a state of 'doership'. I am going to do this, I am going to get it, I will stop this fight, etc. is the beginning of the ego. Even performing *pūjā*s and *yajña*s should not have the 'I'-ness in them. After all, when the whole universe is one, whatever we are doing should be for universal welfare. It should not be for personal gains. Gains would come of their own accord in course of time. What we are doing is only as 'instruments of the Lord'. We are not agents working independently in any of our actions. We are not 'self-employed' people. The *tyāga* of 'I'-ness in the beginning of all our actions is *sarvārambha-parityāga*. If not ourselves, somebody else is capable of doing it always there. We are not special. One could also that *sarvārambha-parityāga* means to stop any undertakings of desire-motivated actions.

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान् यः स मे प्रियः ॥१७॥
yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati |
śubhāśubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||17||

He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires; who has renounced both good and bad, he, My devotee, is dear to Me.

Na hṛṣyati: (Does not rejoice). We all get elated when good things happen to us. Rejoicing is always for a temporary period. No happiness obtained from the outer world is permanent. Happiness is only a state of the mind and it cannot be there permanently. Happiness is one aspect of *dvandva*. It will bring its opposite which is sorrow in course of time. Happiness of having a child born brings sorrow during the child's growth and ends by sorrow at its death in the passage of time. Happiness has to die in course of time. A true devotee has this equanimity of his mind.

Na dveṣṭi: We hate anything which comes in the way of our desires. We hate it when we are criticised by others. We hate things if we fail in our path. It is all because of our desire. If we have no motive in what we are doing (*karma-phala-tyāga*) we cease to hate. Also, if we have no 'I'-ness in our actions, if we are *sarvārambhaparityāgī*s, we will not hate others who come in the way. If we have worked truly and conscientiously we will not hate if others criticise us. One cannot please all. Hate is for undesirable things and circumstances. If we have no desires, hatred will not arise.

Na śocati: (Does not grieve). We grieve only because we develop a sense of attachment to any object. We do not want the object of our attachment to suffer or part with us. Death and disease bring grief. Our attachment to our body brings us grief when it gets ill or hurt. Our attachment to our family will bring grief on several occasions. We should cultivate a sense of detachment to all objects including our body. If our child dies, grief is natural but it should not take hold of us permanently. One must come out of grief. Initially, friends and relatives will come and console us. But later on, they will not come. They expect the person in grief to go back and be part of the society and perform his duty. One can take grief as part of his punishment to his sins of the past. He must feel happy that his crime of the past has received punishment and his path is clear of one of the many crimes awaiting punishment. Serious punishment could be for serious crimes of the past or combined punishment for crimes of the past. Punishment is to be taken as an act of mercy of the Lord.

Na kāṅkṣati: A true devotee does not desire anything at all. He carries on his devotion as an act of duty and gets its reward of *mokṣa*. He does not desire for *mokṣa* also.

Śubhāśubhaparityāgī: (Renouncing both good and bad). If the outcome of an act is good we feel happy and if the outcome is bad, we feel sad. Both are states of mind. A man of equanimity does not feel happy or sad at any outcome of his actions. He has already said *kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu* when he performed the act and so the result does not matter. He has accepted the guidance of his conscience before starting the work. His conscience is his *sārathī* (*mārga-darśaka*, guide). A perfect devotee has attained *jñāna* and his life is totally divine. He is a *jīvanmukta*. He is not affected by *dvandva*s. Really, the quality of *śubhāśubha-parityāga* is attributed to such a person who has reached the state of *nirvikalpa*. He is thought-free. His only thought, in which he is immersed, is "the God or soul". The first stage in development is to renounce the bad, and the next stage is to renounce the good also. It is the result of good and bad in our action that is to be renounced. We should perform good actions but not feel happy at the outcome of such good actions. If we give charity, we should not feel proud. We should do it as an act of duty to God and should not expect praise or any material rewards.

Whatever we have is God's and whatever we receive is a gift given by the Lord. There is no such thing as 'mine'. I am only a safe-keeper of what is given to me.

A true devotee who has renounced both good and evil (*śubhāśubha-parityāgī*) does not discriminate between this and that of what he receives. "Lord, you gave me this and I take it as your *prasāda* and I thank you for the same", is the reaction. He is thankful for anything he gets. Sometimes he gets happy news and sometimes he gets sad news. But the devotee because of his equanimity does not get elated or depressed, and continues to express devotion to the Lord to all his actions.

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥१८॥
samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ |
śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ ||18||

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी संतुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥१९॥
tulya-nindā-stutir maunī saṁtuṣṭo yena kenacit |
aniketaḥ sthiramatir bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ ||19||

He who is equal-minded toward friends and enemies, in honour and disgrace, in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment, to whom praise and criticism are equal, who is silent, satisfied with whatsoever he gets, who has no particular home, steady-minded, full of devotion, such a man is dear to Me.

Five pairs of opposites are given in these two verses.

Equal-minded to friends and enemies: Friends are considered as those who agree with what one is doing, who help in times of need and who share the happiness as theirs. They share what they have with their friend. Enemies are the opposite of friends. They do not agree with what one is doing, try to bring the person down, get pleasure if he is suffering, and do not share his happiness as theirs. They sometimes try to grab what the other person has.

For a devotee, there is no such feeling as friend and enemy. He is equal in his relationship with all. His heart is immersed in the Lord and he does not want any comfort from others. His enemy cannot take his devotion away. He does not go out of his way to show special favour in respect of his friends and does not hate his enemy. He may have people who do not like him but it does not matter to him. He does not wish harm to his enemy. To be honest, he does not consider any person as his enemy, even though that person might harm him. His reaction at the psychological level as friends and foes does not exist.

Honour and disgrace: These two are judged by the existing values and thinking levels at any particular time. A thing of honour at one time may not be estimated by the same person as honourable in a different situation, place and time. For a devotee who has the same value and thinking level at all times, situations and places, honour and disgrace do not matter. He is constantly in love with his Lord. He always acts according to his conscience and does not do anything to get honoured. He does not get depressed if he is disgraced for some reason or the other. Honour and disgrace do not bring agitation in his mind.

Śītoṣṇa: In heat and cold he is equal in his reaction. It should not be taken as physical heat or cold. He will take necessary precautions for these two situations at body-level like anybody else. But his intensity of devotion does not change in either situation. His concentration and love for God remain the same at all times.

Sukhaduḥkheṣu: In joys and sorrows in life. A devotee maintains his devotion to the Lord. In times of joyful situations, he does not forget his devotion. He thanks God for the joys he got. Similarly at times of sorrow, he does not get depressed and blame the Lord. He does not say "O God, I am your devotee, how could You let this happen to me?" His devotion to the Lord does not alter. He takes them as the Lord's test of his devotion even in times of stress and sorrow.

Saṅgavivarjitaḥ: He is free from attachment at mental level to the above three types of experiences. By being detached, one can be a master of all situations in life. These three examples are experiences at physical, mental and intellectual levels.

Tulyanindāstutiḥ: Similarly, he is equal in his devotion even at times when people praise or criticise him. When people praise, he does not lift himself up to a higher level. He does not forget his Lord. If he is criticised, he does not get depressed and forget his love of the Lord. We know that the same person who praises today, may change his tune and criticise tomorrow.

Maunī: *Mauna* is silence. Silence is when one is not talking. But, for a *maunī*, the silence is at the mental plane also. His mind is also silent. It continues to contemplate on the devotion to the Lord. His mind does not inwardly dwell on past experiences.

Yena kenacit santuṣṭaḥ: He is content with whatsoever he gets. In *Śānti-Parva* of *Mahābhārata,* on *mokṣa-dharma,* it is said that a *Brāhmaṇa* is one "who is clad with anything, who is fed on any food and who lies anywhere". A devotee continues his duties of the outer world and is contented with what he gets for his work. In other words, his work is *niṣkāma karma*. Desires eat the mind away. A devotee does not have any desires; he maintains himself on what he gets. He does not demand for more. If he is offered only a fruit, he is contented. He does not ask for special food.

Aniketaḥ: He has no particular attachment to any place of residence. He finds himself 'at home' in any place. A home is a place which gives a sense of possession, happiness and comfort and shelter. For a true devotee, whose possession is his Lord, whose happiness is only the Lord and who gets shelter only under his Lord, such a material possession as a home is unimportant.

In our multitudes of births and deaths, each birth and its possessions are like a traveller going from place to place and staying in a hotel. He knows that the hotel room he got in any place is not his own. He only rented it for some period of time. Also, one can interpret *aniketaḥ* to mean "the one who has no body-identification". He has no *dehābhimāna.* His body is the Lord's and not his own.

All these thirty-five qualities enrich the *bhakta*'s intellectual garden and will help in growing nice, fragrant flowers. Initially the devotee will offer a flower to his Lord's idol. A true devotee, who really becomes a *jñānī*, offers the flower of his own intellectual garden to his Lord.

In chapter 9, verse 26 (*patraṁ puṣpam . . . .*) it is said that the Lord accepts a single leaf, flower or fruit from His devotee. The flower he mentioned could be any of the thirty-five intellectual garden's blooms. (Śaṅkarācārya's *Śivānanda-laharī*).

Sthiramatiḥ bhaktimān naraḥ: With these thirty-five virtues, any man will become the Lord's devotee. Sometimes people ask—why does not the Lord accept me as His devotee? The Lord has no special attachment (favouritism) to any person. He looks at the qualities or virtues in His *bhakta*. Any man with these virtues is entitled to join the rank of *bhakta*s.

> ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते ।
> श्रद्धधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥२०॥
> ***ye tu dharmyāmṛtam idaṁ yathoktaṁ paryupāsate* ।**
> ***śraddhadhānā matparamā bhaktās te'tīva me priyāḥ* ॥20॥**
>
> *They, who follow this "immortal* dharma" *as their goal with faith, such devotees are most dear to Me.*

When the *bhakta* with faith, practises this *dharma* and considers the Lord as his goal (*matparamāḥ*), the Lord will give him the nectar of immortality and considers him as His dearest. There is no use in mere reading or scriptures and attaining knowledge. One must attain wisdom of the teaching. One must realise the 'Soul' within and live in that realisation at physical, mental and intellectual levels. One must have faith in the Lord's teachings. Then one can be called a real Hindu. Perfection from practice is essential.

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे भक्तियोगो नाम द्वादशोऽध्यायः ॥
iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ yogaśāstre
śrīkṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde bkakti-yogo
***nāma dvādaśo'dhyāyaḥ* ॥**

CHAPTER 13

KṢETRA-KṢETRAJÑA-YOGA

Kṣetra literally means a 'place'. *Puṇya-kṣetra* is 'a sacred place'. A sacred place is one where there is usually a temple of great importance. This chapter is considered to be one of the best chapters which gives a direct explanation of the Soul of a person. It also gives the technique to meditate on the Soul within.

A knower of the 'place' is *kṣetrajña*. The knower of the 'Soul' is *kṣetrajña*. The union in which 'the field' merges into the Soul and becomes one with the Soul is *kṣetra-kṣetrajña-yoga*. The theme in this chapter has already had introduction in chapters 7 and 8.

'The body' of *kṣetra* is composed of five elements which come to life only in the presence of the Energy (the Soul) which is *kṣetrajña*. To know the Soul in us, we must know its coverings, gradually learn to detach (undress) the components of the covering. This chapter gives us the method to discriminate and understand the two. The process of detaching from the field is meditation. In chapters 5 and 6 the method of meditation has been described. In this chapter, a further attempt is made to help in meditation by explaining the components of the body.

The *kṣetra* literally constitutes the matter-equipment and also the objects of the world perceived by it. The total universe perceived and the physical body is *kṣetra*. The *kṣetrajña* is He who illumines the field and seemingly functions in the field. He is called the 'knower of the field'. The *jīva*, a commonly used term, is the knower of the field. It is the Soul within, identifying itself with the field. When this identification is removed, *jīva* becomes pure *ātmā* or *jīvātmā*. *Jīvātmā* with total purity and no taints of *vāsanā*s becomes *Paramātmā*. The *jīva* or Soul, because of existing *vāsanā*s, transmigrates from body to body till the *vāsanā*s are burnt out and no new *vāsanā*s are acquired. When such a state is achieved, it becomes one with *Paramātmā*, i.e., attains *mokṣa*.

Even though the Soul is not affected by our external actions, it gets the 'taint' of *vāsanā*s. They have to be washed off to become pure. The dust or smear on the mirror is only on its surface. It is a stain that can be removed by wiping or polishing.

The *jīva* as the knower, comes to experience the joys and sorrows of life. By detachment and meditation the *jīva* gets away from the field and is transformed into Absolute Knowledge. Knower plus field is *jīva*. Knower minus field is pure knowledge, *Paramātmā*.

We have so far analysed the *tat* and *tvam* aspect of *tat tvam asi* (That Thou Art). The last 6 chapters in the *Gītā* constitute the *asi* aspect. Spirit or soul (That) dressed up in matter is 'Thou'. Undressing the matter is the real eternal soul and it is 'Art' (Are).

अर्जुन उवाच

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञमेव च ।
एतद्वेदितुमिच्छामि ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च केशव ।।

arjuna uvāca

prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva kṣetraṁ kṣetrajñam eva ca |
etad veditum icchāmi jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ ca keśava ||

Arjuna said

O Keśava, prakṛti, puruṣa, kṣetra *and* kṣetrajña, *knowledge and that which is to be known, these I wish to know.*

Arjuna wants to know the difference between the body and the soul. *Prakṛti* is the matter or *kṣetra* and *Puruṣa* is the Soul or *kṣetrajña*. Arjuna also by asking about knowledge and that which is to be known, is asking about "*Brahman*, the Supreme".

[This verse is not found in all the editions of the *Gītā*]

श्रीभगवानुवाच

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।
एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ।।१।।

śrī bhagavān uvāca

idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetram ityabhidhīyate |
etadyo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti tadvidaḥ ||1||

The Lord said

> *O Kaunteya, this body is called the field. He who knows the field is known as* kṣetrajña. *The sages who know both say so.*
>
> *tadvidaḥ*: Knower of that.
> *prāhuḥ*: Say

A radio consists of several parts assembled together. The parts assembled can be called the *kṣetra* or the 'field'. When electricity is passed through the components, they come to life and we get music, news, etc. from the radio. The electricity cannot express itself and bring music without the components. The electricity working through the components is *kṣetrajña* or *jīva* or Soul. Electricity or power without the medium of the radio is 'absolute knowledge' (*Brahman*). When the radio is switched off, it is like one going to sleep. When the power supply is cut off, the radio is technically dead. Through the same source of power supply, a plug for a kettle is put on and the power comes out as 'life' of the kettle. When the power cabies are all removed, the energy will remain in the atmosphere till someone again gets the generator going.

The body can be viewed in this manner. The body is compared to the components of the radio. It is *kṣetra*. The Soul needs the body to express itself. The equipment in which the life passes through is defined as *kṣetra*. The Soul expressing through the body is called *jīva*. The Soul apparently forgets its true nature and starts enjoying the world of plurality. He is enjoying the activities in the field. As long as the knower is in the field, there is life in that field. The urge to know and experience the world is 'life'. The urge to know and to experience varies in different individuals. Once the energy or knower or Soul departs from the body that state is called 'death' of the field and not of the knower. The knower (Soul) expressing through another matter or equipment means that it is 'born again'.

Kṛṣṇa says that this hypothesis was made by sages of the past who understood both.

The knower is the intelligence principle in us. It witnesses all modifications of the matter in all the three states of body as in (1) sleep, (2) dream, and (3) wakefulness.

> क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।
> क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम ।।२।।
> ***kṣetrajñaṁ cāpi māṁ viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata* |**
> ***kṣetra-kṣetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat taj jñānaṁ mataṁ mama* ||2||**
>
> *O Arjuna, know Me as the* kṣetrajña *in all the* kṣetras. *Knowledge of the* kṣetra *and* kṣetrajña *is real knowledge, according to My opinion.*

The Lord is making a strong declaration that the knower in all the life's expressions is 'Himself'. He is saying *so'haṁ.* I am in all and because of Me, you are all functioning, He says.

The *jīva* who knows the field has unfortunately identified itself with the field. The Lord, through this statement, is asking us, *jīva*s, to come out of delusion, drop the attachment to the matter and realise the 'Truth'. He is declaring the 'Universal One' or the *advaita* truth here. I am the One, expressing as the many through the various *kṣetra*s, He says.

The knowledge of this *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, according to the Lord, is the true knowledge. All our knowledge in various fields of our lives is not 'real knowledge'. By acquiring the real knowledge, by expressing the 'real knowledge', man becomes divine, i.e., God. He merges into *Paramātmā*.

By saying *sarvakṣetresu*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is declaring that the life-principle is the 'same one' in all. The principle functioning behind the radio, TV, video, kettle, etc. is 'pure energy' and the knowledge of the pure energy is real knowledge.

> तत्क्षेत्रं यच्च यादृक्च यद्विकारि यतश्च यत् ।
> स च यो यत्प्रभावश्च तत्समासेन मे शृणु ।। ३।।
> ***tat kṣetraṁ yac ca yādṛk ca yadvikāri yataśca yat* |**
> ***sa ca yo yat prabhāvaś ca tat samāsena me śṛṇu* ||3||**

> *That* kṣetra*—what it is, how it is, what are its modifications, and from what and how is it born; and the* kṣetrajña; *who he is, What his powers are, All this in brief, hear from me.*
>
> *prabhāva*: Great power.

In our everyday battle of life, towards attaining liberation we face enemy forces all around us. The forces in the opposite camp are strong. One must know his enemy and his powers and prepare a strategy. This is what is meant by knowing the modifications of the field.

One must also know one's strength to fight. The Lord says He will briefly tell Arjuna the powers of the *kṣetrajña*. By knowing our own strength (the hidden strength in all of us), we can fight the battle and win it. It is up to us to make use of our divine strength.

> ऋषिभिर्बहुधा गीतं छन्दोभिर्विविधैः पृथक् ।
> ब्रह्मसूत्रपदैश्चैव हेतुमद्भिर्विनिश्चितैः ।।४।।
> ***ṛṣibhir bahudhā gītaṁ chandobhir vividhaiḥ pṛthak |***
> ***brahmasūtrapadaiś caiva hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ ||4||***
>
> *pṛthak*: Separately.
> *chandobhih*: By the *Veda*s.
> *hetumadbhih*: With rational arguments.
> *viniścitaiḥ*: Decided.
>
> *This knowledge is established by the sages in many ways and by the* Vedas *in various distinctive hymns, and is declared by the decisive arguments of the* Brahmasūtras *also.*

Kṛṣṇa is again repeating to Arjuna that this knowledge about *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* is not new. Kṛṣṇa may have newly introduced the words *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* but the basic of what they are has been declared by learned *ṛṣi*s of the past. In different hymns of the *Veda*s and *Upaniṣad*s, *Brahma-jñānī*s of the past have declared what knowledge is.

Brahmasūtras are also known as *Vedāntasūtra* or *Śārīraka-Śāstra*. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's doctrine of *advaita* philosophy is based on *Brahmasūtras*. The *Brahmasūtra* comprises of four chapters. Each chapter is divided into four parts subdivided into sections (*adhikaraṇas*). Each section is made up of *sūtras*, each subject is discussed fully and logically. It presents a reason for objection and gives answers to them.

The statements show that subtle intellectual and analytical reasoning has been used before coming to conclusions. As they are from the Men of Wisdom, Śrī Kṛṣṇa considers them as the highest Truth.

(*Brahmasūtras* are a compilation made by Bhagavān Vyāsa. In the second century A.D., Bādarāyaṇa produced his works on *Brahmasūtras*.)

महाभूतान्यहङ्कारो बुद्धिरव्यक्तमेव च ।
इन्द्रियाणि दशैकं च पञ्च चेन्द्रियगोचराः ॥५॥
mahābhūtāny ahaṁkāro buddhir avyaktam eva ca |
indriyāṇi daśaikaṁ ca pañca cendriyagocarāḥ ||5||

इच्छा द्वेषः सुखं दुःखं संघातश्चेतना धृतिः ।
एतत्क्षेत्रं समासेन सविकारमुदाहृतम् ॥६॥
icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṁghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ |
etat kṣetraṁ samāsena savikāram udāhṛtam ||6||

The great elements, egotism, intellect, and also the Unmanifested (mūla-prakṛti); *the ten senses and the mind, five sense-objects;*

desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, aggregate of body and senses, intelligence, fortitude—all this and their modifications are briefly described as 'kṣetram'.

saṁghātaḥ: Aggregate of body and senses.
savikāram: With modifications.
udāhṛtam: Described.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has given us twenty-four principles (*tattvas*) of

Sāṁkhya philosophy. *Tattvas* are principle factors of *prakṛti*. All the twenty-four factors together constitute the field. Field is not just the physical body. It includes the mind and intellect and also the world of plurality experienced. It includes modifications of the mind like pain, pleasure, etc. All good and bad modifications form part of the *kṣetra*.

Mahābhūtāni: These are five great elements: space, water, earth, fire and air. All items of perception are a combination of these elements.

Egotism: This is *ahaṁkāra*, the feeling of *aham* or 'I'-ness. It is opposite to the feeling of *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*. The soul projected out through the mind and sense-organs develops a sense of attachment to the world of perception and starts identifying itself with it. It starts enjoying and suffering the pleasures and pains and sorrows of life. It becomes ego (*jīva*). This individuality arising out of relationship with plurality is *aham*. We witnessed in the first chapter how a learned man like Arjuna showed this aspect of his nature. He repeatedly said "My people, I will suffer" etc.

Buddhi (intellect): This is the determining faculty in all of us, humans. It helps us in deciding what is good and what is bad in all our daily experiences. Unfortunately, several times we forget to use it or suppress its judgement and do what our instincts urge us to do.

In *Gītopadeśam*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa shows that reasoning should hold the reins of the mind (horses) and implies that one would attain *mokṣa* by acting according to 'godly conscience'.

Avyakta: This is *mūla prakṛti*. It is the basis of *prakṛti*. It is opposite to *mūla puruṣa* who is *Paramātmā*. *Mūla-prakṛti* is not seen and experienced. It is *avyakta* or unmanifest. It is also known as *māyā*. All the subtle bodies with their remaining *vāsanās* (from their previous births) together constitute *māyā*. In other words, *māyā* is a "bundle of desires". Later on, we will learn that these are: (1) *sāttvika,* (2) *rājasika* or (3) *tāmasika* type of desires. Only *Brahman* is above *māyā*. Our ignorance of *Brahman* is due to *māyā*. *Māyā* is a bundle of impressions of our thought-processes of the past which are lying in wait to become actions at present or in the future. Till they are totally burnt out and no new *vāsanā*s (thought-imprints) come in, we cannot transcend *māyā* and realise *Brahman*.

The ten senses: They are the five sense-organs of perception and the five organs of action. Through these vehicles, we perceive the world and react to the world. They give us our idea of the universe. The total democratic idea of the universe by all of us humans, in this world is the universe we commonly associate with.

Ekam eva: This is considered to be the mind. It is the mind which receive the impulses and sends its response through the organs of action. The mind has the benefit of the intellect to arrive at any judgements.

Pañca-indriyagocaraḥ: The five objects of senses. Each of our sense-organs has only one faculty. Our eyes can see (light), the nose can smell (earth), ears can hear (space), tongue is for taste (water) skin for touch (air). In the 7th verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has introduced the various good and bad modifications of the mind. The mind is the one that decides on what is pain, what is sorrow, what is happiness, etc. They are all considered as *prakṛti*. Even *dhṛti* (fortitude or determination) becomes *prakṛti* because it is a mental character.

Savikāram: The field (because of the mind) constantly changes owing to its capacity of modification which is due to the mind. The only thing that does not change is the pure knowledge, *kṣetrajña*). *Ātmā* is the only one that does not change.

The entire field which can change is called *anātma*.

अमानित्वमदम्भित्वमहिंसा क्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।
आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः ।।७।।
amānitvam adambhitvam ahiṁsā kṣāntir ārjavam |
***ācāryopāsanaṁ śaucaṁ sthairyam ātmavinigrahaḥ* ||7||**

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहङ्कार एव च ।
जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ।।८।।

indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahaṁkāra eva ca |
janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam ||8||

असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।
नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु ।।९।।
asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putra-dāra-gṛhādiṣu |
nityaṁ ca samacittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu ||9||

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ।।१०।।
mayi cānanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī |
vivikta-deśa-sevitvam aratir janasaṁsadi ||10||

अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम् ।
एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तमज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा ।।११।।
adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvaṁ tattva-jñānārtha-darśanam |
etaj jñānam iti proktam ajñānaṁ yad ato nyathā ||11||

Humility, absence of pretention, non-injury, fortitude, uprightness, service of the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control;

dispassion towards sense-objects, absence of egotism, perception of evils in birth, death, old age, sickness and pain; non-attachment and non-identification with son, wife, home, etc. and constant even-mindedness during desirable and undesirable occurrences;

unswerving devotion to Me by the yoga of non-separation resorting to solitary places, distaste for the society of men;

constancy in Self-knolwedge, perception of the true end of knowledge. All this is jñānam *and what is contrary to it is* ajñānam.

A total of twenty qualities are mentioned in these five verses. These qualities are needed to attain self-perfection. Self-perfection according to Lord Kṛṣṇa is *jñānam* (knowledge). One must constantly endeavour to develop these qualities in himself and maintain them constantly. Not only that, it should also become his way of life. *Mokṣa* is not difficult if one follows this rule.

(1) Amānitvam: Absence of self-glorification. This is the first of the twenty qualities and very important one as well. The person, trying to achieve self-perfection does so for realisation of the God in him. If he develops self-esteem about what he is doing, he will expect others to praise him constantly for his efforts. In any company, he should not be showing off his scriptural knowledge.

(2) Adambhitvam: Unpretentiousness. He is very modest. He is humble at all times. He does not pretend or show off his knowledge.

(3) Ahiṁsā: Non-injury. This applies to all creatures in the universe. He is *sāttvika* by nature and does not injure others. In all his activities of speech, though and action he does not harm others. He has no vicious feelings against anybody. If someone injures or hurts him, he will probably keep away from him. He will ask the Lord to forgive such a person. If the *jñānī* harms him in return, then he cannot be termed a man of self-perfection. His attachment should only be to his soul and not to his body or the surroudings.

(4) Kṣāntiḥ: Forbearance. He has a capacity to suffer without getting upset. He accepts all calamities as God's work. He knows that the pain of suffering cannot be permanent and it has to end some time. He takes necessary steps to alleviate the sufferings (in the form of illness, injury to himself or his beloved ones) and does not sit back without doing anything.

(5) Ārjavam: He is upright. He is constantly working righteously. All his thoughts and actions show his spiritual upbringing and development. He does not go for anything that is not his own. He carries on his normal duties and gets due rewards for the same. He does not utter any foul words nor entertain foul thoughts. He has *ātmadṛṣti,* i.e., he sees *ātmā* (Soul) in all.

(6) Ācāryopāsanam: Service of the teacher. Without the blessings of the *guru,* no progress in spiritual life is possible. Humbleness in the presence of *guru* is very important. The thought, "I know better than he knows" should not develop in the mind of the *sādhaka*. Service to the teacher including physical service and also following the teacher's advice is *ācāryopāsanā*. True devotion towards the teacher can be there only when one identifies himself totally with the teacher.

Who is a *guru*? In the early days of one's childhood the mother is the greatest teacher. She teaches the child the code of conduct to live in society. This respect towards mother should not decrease in later years when one has reached the level of higher studies. After the mother it is the father and then the teachers. Respect to all teachers from primary school to the university and in other areas of learning should be maintained always.

(7) Śaucam: Purity. Purity externally and internally has been stressed several times by the Lord. Purity in both thoughts and actions is essential. It is important that we wash ourselves everyday to clean our physical body. Similarly, our mind should be washed of dirt and filthy passions also through contemplations, *sādhanā* and *satsaṅga*.

(8) Sthairyam: We must be firm, determined and resolute in our path of spiritual progress. There may be a few people who will try to drag the person away from his path. Family members sometimes do not want their son to develop this *saṁnyāsa* attitude. Some ignorant people might ridicule him. They may say that religious and spiritual discussions are for retired old people. As we do not know when disease or dementia hits us, we must start *sādhanā* early in life and be steadfast in our purpose to achieve the spiritual goal.

(9) Ātmavinigrahaḥ: Self-control. It is not controlling *ātmā* but controlling the mind and sense-organs. Sense-organs always send in impulses and the mind dwells on them. If the impulses are pleasant, desires crop up. Constantly controlling both mind and sense-organs is the only way to stop *māyā* from distracting us in our path.

(10) Indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam: One should develop dispassion towards sense-objects. Desire for sense-objects takes the *sādhaka* on the downward path. *Vairāgya* means dislike for objects. One should not yield to temptation. Running away from household duties and wearing ochre robes is not *vairāgya*. There should be no mental preoccupation with objects that bring in pleasures. The mind should not dwell on sense-objects.

(11) Anahaṁkāram: *Ahaṁkāra* is 'I'-ness. The ego expressing itself as 'I' do it, 'my' people do it is *ahaṁkāra*. A true *sādhaka* does not associate 'I'-ness in his thoughts or deeds. In the intellectual garden, when one is planting the seeds of good virtues, one must also root out any weeds. Weeds find their way easily into any garden. Uprooting the grown-up weeds and constantly removing weeds before they root in, are essential. The weed of *ahaṁkāra*, if not uprooted, will hinder the growth of good virtues. The blossoming of intellect is impossible if the weed of *ahaṁkāra* is allowed to grow. *Anahaṁkāram* means the absence of *ahaṁkāra*.

(12) Janma-mṛḥtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha doṣānudarśanam: The *sādhaka* should have a clear understanding of the sorrows and of the evils of birth, death, old age and disease. *Anudarśanam* means thinking deeply and seeing clearly. Birth, death, old age and disease are part and parcel of the cycle of *saṁsāra*. Birth in its turn brings in diseases, old age and death. It is unavoidable and no force on earth can stop it. The *sādhaka* clearly understands this. He does not get elated if a child is born to him. He knows that sorrows follow for the rest of the newborn's life.

Another way of looking at this statement is as follows. It could mean birth of a new desire. The desire, if made to grow, will bring problems in its turn. Desires will bring in more desires and other evils of the mind like *krodha* and *lobha* will follow to ruin the person. When the *sādhaka* perceives the pains one is going to suffer as a consequence of birth, he will put more efforts to get out of the evil. His efforts at spiritual *sādhanā* become stronger. He will dearly want to attain the state of birthlessness, i.e., *mokṣa*.

(13) Asaktiḥ: Non-attachment. Attachment is the condition wherein the mind attaches itself to objects of the world of plurality. It makes one feel extremely happy to be attached to that object. It starts off as small agitations in the mind and the agitations become stronger as the liking for the object increases. The attachments are not permanent and die off in the course of time. But during that period of attachment, concentration on other aspects of life including *sādhanā* or spiritual practice gets weaker. In childhood we would be attached to friends and toys which change years later. The friends and games we like at college are different to the friends we make later in our life. We do have probably one or two childhood friends for life, but the majority will not remain attached permanently. Non-attachment from the beginning will therefore help towards concentration on spiritual learning.

(14) Anabhiṣvangaḥ putradāra-gṛhādiṣu: Non-identification with child, wife, home and other possessions. This aspect might raise eyebrows of quite a few critics. How can one not have attachment to one's own wife and children? "Should we not love our family?" they may ask. Lord Kṛṣṇa does not say "do not love your family". He has said that one should perform duties as per the *śāstra*s. *Śāstra*s have clearly prescribed duties for every householder. The duties of children, parents, family members are all given. The family is one unit and the members are part of that unit. (Of course, later on one must reach the heights of universal oneness.) What Kṛṣṇa says is that there should not be excessive love for such persons. When one has excessive love, automatically that acts like an intoxication. He would find it impossible to leave their company. After all, death and disease are part and parcel of life. Someone or the other has to die sooner or later. The attitude in case of death of the beloved one should be as follows: "I am glad my . . . has died, because I am capable of withstanding the separation better than if it were the other way around." Or it should be like this: "the world is full of misery. It is not a safe place to live. It is better my . . . does not have to suffer these anymore". "Let me be the sufferer rather than my beloved", is the attitude of a real *sādhaka*. During the course of his life, the *sādhaka* would perform his duties in looking after the family in a righteous manner. He will provide them with shelter, food, etc. from the monies earned righteously. He will provide necessary medical treatment during illnesses. What he would not do is that he will not be madly in love with them. He continues his spiritual practice with the least amount of agitations from his attachment to family members. He does not abandon his family and become a *saṁnyāsī*. But mentally he is detached from that sense of 'mine'.

(15) Samacittatvam: He will have equanimity of mind wherein, in all situations in life, both desirable and undesirable, he will maintain the same equanimity. As he has no feeling of ego ('my'-ness). The objects from the materialistic world and the reaction of the mind towards those objects has no bearing to him as far as he is concerned. His attachment is only to his soul. If he wins a prize in a lottery, he does not get elated and if he loses something he does not get depressed.

(16) Mayi ca ananya-yogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī: By the *yoga* of non-separation, unswerving devotion unto 'Me'. After developing the virtues mentioned so far, the Lord is now giving a practical approach to self-perfection. The energy saved by following the way of life given before, can be channelled towards developing union with the Lord. The devotion to the Lord should be constant and continuous. (There should not be periods of devotion and periods of enjoying worldly objects.) Perfect devotion cannot happen overnight. It needs long practice but it is not impossible. In Hindu mythology there are a number of gods. People sometimes wonder at it and even laugh at it. Our *ṛṣis* were very intelligent. They knew it was impossible for all Hindus to develop love and affection to only one form of God. According to them there is only one formless *Brahman* into whom we merge. The way to reach that state is by going through simple primary spiritual education. But giving different gods with moral stories attached to all of them, they have helped groups of Hindus to develop a strong love to the god of their choice. In this verse the Lord asks them to develop unswerving devotion to one god of their choice with eventual progress to merge into the 'Supreme *Puruṣa*'. He continues this theme with the next virtue, viz., non-separation: *ananya-yogena.* The devotee should develop undivided attention and enthusiasm for the Lord. Objects from the world not only bring happiness but they bring sorrows as well. One cannot be united with two things at the same time. Gradually, from the union with the world one should develop union with the *ātmā.* Through this process union with the *Paramātmā* can be achieved.

(17) Vivikta-deśa-sevitvam: Resorting to solitude. In the early stages of *sādhanā* it is better to stay in a solitary place for a short while and contemplate on the form of the Lord according to one's choice. With this in mind, every household is advised in Hindu religious teaching, to have a prayer-room with idols and photos of one's choice. All the members of the family are expected to go in there at any time and spend sometime in prayers and meditation. Years of sincere practice would help to strengthen the mind of the *sādhaka*. He can then keep up the devotion in all circumstances in his life. The quality of mind to get distracted in its attempt is called *vikṣepa*. To spend free time is called *kālakṣepa.* To avoid *vikṣepa* in the early days of life, one should make a habit of resorting to solitary life and prayers.

(18) Aratir janasaṁsadi: Develop distaste for the crowded society of men. Generally in a crowd different people have different topics to talk about. Many of them turn out to be useless topics. Also, one might get inadvertently entangled in that talk which may lead to further attachment to that topic at a later stage. If spiritual progress is the goal, one should join the crowd of similar-minded people. Such a group is called *satsaṅga* (the group that follows the truth or a true group).

(19) Adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvam: Constancy of divine contemplation and knowledge is suggested by the Lord. It is no use learning about the Self. It should be practised. One should constantly remember the 'Soul' inside oneself and see the same Soul in all. The Light of Knowledge is 'understanding the Soul' (*ātmā*). If the light is lit one can see and if the light is put out one cannot see. By constant contemplation of the divine, one should show divinity to all by his divine actions. The Light of knowledge should make one's divine qualities project out at all times. This light should be constantly lit. "Let the light of *jñāna* shine always," Śrī Kṛṣṇa says.

(20) Tattva-jñānārtha-darśanam: It means, perception of the end of true knowledge. By the above virtues one can directly experience "the truth". This is called experiencing of *brahma-jñāna* or *mokṣa*. One should understand what the end-result is and remember the goal always. Liberation from sorrow of this worldly life is a great feeling which can only be experienced. It cannot be bought or stolen or inherited. By developing a clear perception of the goal, one can continue uninterrupted *sādhanā*.

The goal to achieve should be always clear. The *māyā* (ignorance) acts like a veil in front of the goal to be achieved. The veil of ignorance has to be lifted to see the goal and then one can walk into the goal.

Etad jñānam iti proktam: All this is called *jñāna* (knowledge), i.e., *jñāna* of the Lord.

Ajñānam yadato'nyathā: Everything other than this is *ajñāna* (ignorance). All knowledge other than spiritual knowledge is not real knowledge. They bind the person to the world. Spiritual knowledge is the only one that gives liberation.

ज्ञेयं यत्तत्प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वाऽमृतमश्नुते ।
अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ॥१२॥

jñeyaṁ yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvā'mṛtam aśnute |
anādimat paraṁ brahma na sat tan nāsad ucyate ||12||

That which is Brahman *to be known, knowing which one attains immortality, I will declare: the beginningless Supreme Brahman is said to be neither existence nor non-existence, sat or asat.*

jñeyaṁ: To be known.
jñātvā: Having known.
aśnute: Attains.

After having talked about knowledge (*jñāna*) in the previous *śloka*, the Lord now proceeds to say what is 'That' which has to be achieved by knowledge.

In the next six verses, the Lord explains the nature of *Brahman*. In this chapter, at first the Lord explained what is *kṣetra*. He said it is a holy place with the Lord (*kṣetrajña*) inside who witnesses all actions of the *jīva*. He then gave the qualities needed to understand the *kṣetrajña*.

Now, he is describing who is the *kṣetrajña* and what is the end-result of *tattva-jñāna*. First of all one should abandon bad qualities, then he should acquire qualities; later on, he should drop the good qualities also to attain *mokṣa*. From *dvaita* the Lord leads one to *advaita*.

Yajjñātvāmṛtam aśnute: "Knowing which one attains immortality". Attachment to (*yoga*) worldly objects leads to happiness initially but ends in sorrow ultimately. Man from time immemorial has been looking for 'that happiness' which does not end in sorrow. Our Vedic *ṛṣi*s have cleverly analysed this and come to the conclusion that non-attachment is the only way to find permanent happiness. They helped us by giving us knowledge or insight into *Brahman* wherein there is no state of sorrow.

Anādimat param: This *Brahman* is Supreme, without any beginning. Beginning and end are only in relation to time. *Brahman,* the primordial energy, is timeless. He was there before, He is there now and will be there in the future. He does not change. He is supreme energy needed for survival of all, at all times.

Na sat na asat ucyate: It is not said to be existence or nonexistence. This is very difficult to describe. *Brahman* is not an object to be perceived. It cannot be apprehended by our sense-organs. It cannot be understood by our mind. Our intellect cannot analyse it. It is therefore said to be *na sat*: not existence. It is only in relation to material objects we see that *Brahman* is said to be *'na sat'*.

As *Brahman* has manifested Himself as the world of plurality, which is all of us, it cannot be *asat*. Each one of us is *Brahman* and hence He is 'existence' (*na asat*).

Both *sat* and *asat* (truth and non-truth) are only judgements at our intellectual level. They are only thoughts. All our judgements are illumined by our conscience (soul). So, as far as the Soul (*Brahman*) is concerned, *Sat* and *asat* do not apply.

सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत्सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम् ।
सर्वतः श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥१३॥
***sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ tat sarvato'kṣiśiromukham* |**
***sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati* ||13||**

With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and faces everywhere, with ears everywhere, He exists in the universe having pervaded all.

pāṇipādam: Having hands and feet.

The description of *sākāra Brahman* is given in this verse. *Brahman*, the conscience or life-principle, is inside all living creatures. Without the life-principle there is no existence at all for any creature. The life-principle or the divine spark inside is enveloped by the physical body. The physical body has hands, feet, eyes, head, face and ears. Therefore *Brahman* is said to have hands and feet, ears and faces everywhere.

One should understand something else here. Whatever one does, there is always a witness around. Hence one should act and live according to the dictates of the scriptures and one's own conscience. Would a thief steal if he sees policemen around him? Every creature we come across has God inside him. We should respect 'that God'. We should not commit any sinful acts (physically or mentally) because there is a witness for such acts (i.e., *ātman*, God.)

Kṛṣṇa immediately asserts again that *Brahman* pervades the whole universe as well. The entire universe is *dṛśya* and can be perceived by our sense-organs and *Brahman* pervades the entire universe. The energy supports the universe and that energy is *nirguṇa, nirākāra Brahman.*

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।
असक्तं सर्वभृच्चैव निर्गुणंगुणभोक्तृ च ॥१४॥

sarvendriya-guṇābhāsaṁ sarvendriya-vivarjitam |
asaktaṁ sarvabhṛc caiva nirguṇaṁ guṇabhoktṛ ca ||14||

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च ।
सूक्ष्मत्वात्तदविज्ञेयं दूरस्थं चान्तिके च तत् ॥१५॥
bahir antaś ca bhūtānām acaraṁ caram eva ca |
sūkṣmatvāt tad avijñeyaṁ dūrasthaṁ cāntike ca tat ||15||

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।
भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च ॥१६॥
avibhaktaṁ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam |
bhūta bhartṛ ca taj jñeyaṁ grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca ||16||

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।
ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ॥१७॥
jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasaḥ param ucyate |
jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ jñānagamyaṁ hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam ||17||

Shining through the functions of all, yet without the senses; unattached, yet supporting all (guṇas). *Without qualities* (guṇas) *yet experiences all qualities.*

Exists within and without all beings, unmoving and also moving, because of its subtlety it is unknowable; near and far away—is that.

Is undivided and exists in all beings as divided, is the supporter of all beings, is worthy to be known, it is destroying and also generating; it is 'He'.

That is the light of all shining objects, is said to be beyond darkness, it is knowledge, the knowable and the goal of knowledge. It is seated in the heart of all beings.

The *Gītā* prescribes the method (*sādhanā*) to reach the goal (*sādhya*).

By practice one should attain the goal. The goal to be achieved is called *jñānagamyam.* This can be achieved by developing the twenty virtues mentioned in verses 8-12. This can be by following any one of the four paths of *karma, jñāna, dhyāna* and *bhakti.*

What is the goal? It is to attain *Brahman*. What is *Brahman*? We should have an idea of what we are going to achieve by our efforts. "*Jñeyam*"—the knowable, i.e., *Brahman,* is described in these four verses. All contradictory statements are given but one should not get confused by them. What it really means is that *Brahman* is *nirākāra* and *nirguṇa.* How can one describe something which has no shape and no features? Hence, in comparison to what we can perceive with our senses, an attempt to describe *Brahman* is made here.

Sarvendriya-guṇābhāsam, sarvendriya-vivarjitam: *Brahman* shines through the functions of all senses and yet is without the senses. This can be better understood by examining one's own common experience. Steam functions through the medium of an engine. But the engine cannot be called steam. The engine is only a medium to express its power. The power is present always. When properly collected and transmitted it comes out to express the power of the engine.

Similarly, the life-principle or energy inside all of us, shines by the function of all senses. The function of the eyes is seeing, the function of the ears is hearing, but life itself has no such function. It expresses itself in these organs as their functions. This denotes that the Self is beyond sense-organs.

Asaktam sarvabhṛt caiva: Unattached, yet supporting all. *Ātman*, the Soul, is not attached to the world of plurality nor to the physical body. It is only *sākṣī* or witness. But without it, the world of plurality cannot exist. Energy is needed to support all life, but energy is not affected by the actions of the body.

The waves in the ocean are supported by the ocean. Without the ocean, the waves do not exist. But the waves cannot be ocean. Waves come out of the ocean and merge into the ocean. If one can take the waves away (hypothetically), the ocean will still be present. This denotes that the Self is beyond the mind.

Nirguṇam guṇabhoktṛ ca: Without qualities, yet experiences all qualities. This denotes that the Self is beyond the intellect also.

Guṇas are attitudes of our mind/intellect. They are the climatic conditions in our bosom due to our *vāsanās*. They are described in the next chapter. The Soul or Self is in itself bereft of these *guṇas*. But, the Self identifying with the intellect and thereby with the *guṇas* is called the ego or *jīva*. He seemingly experiences all the qualities. When the Soul is not conditioned by the mind it is not called *jīva*. It becomes Absolute Self.

Because we, the body, are conditioned by the sense-organs, mind and intellect, it appears as though the Soul is possessor of all and experiencer of all the experiences mentioned in this verse.

Bahir antaḥ bhūtānām: (Within and without all the beings). (*bahir*: without) As has been described before, *Brahman* is inside the beings. He is the life-principle for the existence of all living creatures. At the same time He is pervading the entire universe. So, He is said to be outside all of us. If we look upon each individual being as a separate entity, *Brahman* is present outside each of us. This is because in front of each of us, in the beings around us, *Brahman* is present.

If we take the example of a radio, we can understand it better. The radio functions by catching the waves of a particular wavelength. For this, it needs electricity. Electricity collects the electrical sound-waves. Radio as such will not function without electricity. If we tune it properly we do get the music from the radio. Similarly, *Brahman* is all round us. The radio is only an equipment for the sound-waves to express themselves. Radio is said to be functioning as long as it has electric power inside it. Similarly, our body functions only if the Soul (energy) is inside. Without the body, the Soul cannot express itself. So, *Brahman* is said to be inside and outside all beings.

Caram acaram eva: (Moving and yet unmoving). The universe which is *prakṛti* makes it appear as though *Brahman* is moving. *Brahman* as such is non-moving. *Brahman* or the Soul inside us is like a passenger in a train. When the train is moving, it appears that the person is travelling. The passenger sitting in one place, has moved from place 'A' to 'B'. It is because the *upādhi* (or the vehicle, body) moved.

A thing is said to be moving if it has a shape that occupies an area. For example, a chair has a shape and mass which occupies some space in a room. I can therefore move the chair from one place to another. If *Brahman* is all-pervading, then He is motionless. This is because there is no place without *Brahman*. In relation to the room, the chair occupies a space in the room. One cannot move the room from one place to another.

Similarly, one cannot move the house from one place to another. The space occupied by the house, as far as that space is concerned, has no shape apart from its shape. It takes a shape in relation to its surroundings. (If I occupy the entire space in the chair, then I cannot move in the space I occupy).

Another explanation can be given to this statement. *Brahman* is present in both moving objects like man, birds, reptiles, etc. and also non-moving objects like trees and mountains.

Sūkṣamtvāt avijñeyam: We all know that the smaller an object is, that much more difficult it is for us to see and understand it. Our eyes can only see as big as the lens in our eyes permits us to see. If it is smaller still, we need to use a microscope. We can use a high-powered electron microscope and can see smaller objects. To "see" such small objects like genes in the chromosomes is very difficult.

The primordial energy, *Brahman*, is not possible to be seen by our eyes or to be analysed by our mind. We cannot comprehend it. He is the intelligent principle called *cidākāśa*. He is so subtle that we cannot see Him.

Dūrastham ca antike ca tat: Because He is inside all of us, He is very near to us. Because we are not able to understand Him, He is said to be very far away. A thing that cannot be understood is said to be far away from our mental plane. Our eyes have a limit within which they can see things. Our ears have a limit in which they can hear from a distance. As *Brahman* is all-pervading, surrounding the entire universe, our physical sense-organs cannot reach Him and hence He is said to be far away.

Avibhaktam ca bhuteṣu, vibhaktam iva ca sthitam: Undivided, and yet in beings, it exists as if divided. The word "as if" must be noted here (in Sanskrit it is *iva*). If we all have *Brahman* inside us all, does it not mean that there are a number of *Brahmans*? Does it mean there are millions of *Brahmans*? That is why the word *iva* is used. It is only an imagination by the souls that identify themselves with the bodies, i.e., *jīvas*. There is only one *Brahman* and yet He appears divided and exists in that division. The sun or the moon reflects wherever there is a reflecting surface. If we are inside a hall of mirrors, innumerable reflections of us are seen. But we are still only one entity. There is only one sun or moon about which we do not have any doubt. Similarly *Brahman* is only one.

Space is one big entity. We can divide it the way we want by putting boundaries and demarcations. If we take away the boundaries or demarcations, it is one single space. An acre of land can be said to belong to four different persons with demarcations of areas belonging to each of them. An acre of land will still be an acre. It is only divided for the sake of convenience.

This is *advaita* philosophy. There is only one *Brahman* expressing through various manifestations. We are therefore really "part of one".

Bhūta-bhartṛ (Supporter of beings) **grasiṣṇu** (devourer) **prabhaviṣṇu** (generator) **tadjñeyam:** (That to be known). He is Brahmā—the Creator, Viṣṇu—the Supporter and Śiva—the Destroyer.

It is like saying "mother with different hats". When she wears a chef's hat, she is a cook. When she wears a Don's cap, she is a teacher etc. The same person, i.e., mother, takes different roles as teacher, friend, cook, nurse, etc. Because of the role taken at a particular time she is addressed differently.

All the plants are born in earth, supported by the earth and die away into the earth. Unless they die away, there will be no room for new plants to come up.

In Hindu philosophy, death is also taken as an act of divinity and we give a divine status to it. Without death, there cannot be anything new coming up. From Truth or *Brahman*, the world of plurality is projected (creation). It is maintained (support) and into that Truth the world dissolves (destruction). When we realise the Truth and merge into Truth, the imaginary *saṁsāra* dies away as far as the mental and intellectual perceptions are concerned. All of this is to be known by the mind. By experience one gets wisdom and then one can attain *mokṣa.*

Jyotiṣāmapi tad jyotiḥ: Even of shining objects like sun, moon, etc., that is the light. *Brahman* is the light of all. What does it mean? In literal terms, 'light' makes us aware of things. We cannot be aware of things if there were no light. Similarly, the light inside us, "the conscience", makes us aware of the material world and its experiences. *Brahman*, the Self, is therefore the light of all lights. Externally, we know that the sun and moon are the sources of light. If there is no life in us, we cannot see the sun or moon also. As light is the source of life, our light, the conscience, is the light of all lights.

Tamasaḥ param: Beyond darkness. *Tamas* is considered as ignorance. A *tāmasika* man cannot understand anything because he is ignorant. Our sense-organs, mind and intellect give us an idea of the material world only. They are totally ignorant of the real knowledge which is beyond them. Hence, *Brahman* is said to be beyond darkness.

***Jñāñam* (knowledge), *jñeyam* (that, to be known), *jñānagamyam* (that which is to be understood or reached):** *Brahman* or conscience is what the knowledge is all about. *Brahman* is the knowledge that is to be known. And *Brahman* or knowledge is that which we have to reach and merge into. We cannot catch it but we can get dissolved in it. By developing all the qualities mentioned in verses 8-12, one can attain *jñānam.*

Hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam: It is said that this knowledge is seated in the hearts of all beings. *Brahman* is inside all. The postal address of the Lord is given here. Many of us ask the question—where is God? The answer is here. He is inside each of us. This is *advaita* philosophy. *Brahman* is one and is in every object in this world. Universal love can be developed by realising this truth. 'Heart' is the term we use to express our love, tenderness, etc. *Brahman*, all-loving and caring, is therefore said to be in the hearts of all beings.

इति क्षेत्रं तथा ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं चोक्तं समासतः ।
मद्भक्त एतद्विज्ञाय मद्भावायोपपद्यते ॥१८॥
***iti kṣetraṁ tathā jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ coktaṁ samāsataḥ* |**
***madbhakta etad vijñāya madbhāvāyopapadyate* ||18||**

Thus, the field, as well as the knowledge and that which is to be known have been described briefly. My devotee, knowing this, enters into My being.

vijñāya: Knowing.
madbhāvāya: To My being (*mokṣa*)
upapadyate: Is fit.

After giving a brief account of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa concludes this section by stating as to who is fit to attain 'His being'. A true devotee, who has attained the knowledge by experience (wisdom) about *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña,* is fit to attain 'His being'.

Attain 'His being' means attaining *mokṣa*. Wisdom comes by practical experience. The devotee must develop all the twenty qualities mentioned so far in verses 8-12. He will then, by the grace of God, get *buddhi-yoga* and it enables him to understand the *kṣetrjña*. This enables him to become one with *Paramātmā*.

The seeds of good qualities develop into intellectual flowers. Flowers when offered to the Lord become fruits of knowledge. By digesting the fruits of knowledge one attains *mokṣa*. By knowing the *kṣetra*, one knows everything other than the Lord (*prakṛti)*. By knowing *kṣetrajña* one knows *Brahman*. By seeing the *kṣetrajña* in all the *kṣetra*s, the devotee, who becomes a *jñānī* realises the *advaita* nature of the Lord. This will lead him to *mokṣa*.

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव विद्ध्यनादी उभावपि ।
विकारांश्च गुणांश्चैव विद्धि प्रकृतिसंभवान् ॥१९॥

prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva viddhy anādī ubhāv api |
vikārāṁśca guṇāṁś caiva viddhi prakṛtisaṁbhavān ||19||

Know that prakṛti *and* puruṣa *are both beginningless. Know also that modifications and qualities are born of* prakṛti.

anādi: Beginningless.
vikārāṁśca: And modifications.

If one considers that *prakṛti,* which is *māyā,* is 'ignorance' and *Puruṣa* is 'knowledge', one can understand this verse better.

'I', the real *Puruṣa*, in the course of several births, associated with *prakṛti* and its modifications and *guṇa*s get ignorance that clouds my thinking. If I am asked when did I start getting ignorant, I would have to say "I do not know". Here, the Lord says "it is beginningless". *Puruṣa,* the *Brahman* as we understood is beginningless. *Prakṛti* was also born when *Puruṣa* projected Himself and became *jīva*. So, *prakṛti* is also beginningless

There is a sentence missing here and its meaning is very important. The Lord has said about the "Beginning". He has not mentioned about the end. Ignorance (*prakṛti*) ends, as far as the *jīva* is concerned, on getting *vijñāna* (wisdom). It merges back into the *Puruṣa.*

The modifications of *prakṛti* (elements, intellect, ego, mind, senses, pleasures, pains, etc.) has been described in verses 6 and 7 of this chapter. The *guṇa*s are going to be described in the next chapter. In other words, the one that is changeless and eternal is *Puruṣa* and the rest born of the matter (*prakṛti*) is subject to constant change. The changes are built upon the foundation of *ātmā*.

कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते ।
पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते ॥२०॥

kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate |
puruṣaḥ sukha-duḥkhānāṁ bhoktṛtve hetur ucyate ||20||

In the production of the body and the senses, prakṛti *is said to be the cause. In the experience of pleasure and pain,* Puruṣa *is said to be the cause.*

kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve: In producing the effects and the cause.
hetuḥ: Cause
bhoktṛtve: In the experience.

The words *kāryam* and *kāraṇam* have to be understood properly. Because of *kāraṇam* (the cause) the *kāryam* (effect) exists.

Kāraṇam consists of thirteen items. They are the five great elements (macrocosmic) represented via the five sense-organs (microcosmic) which bring in the stimuli of the outer world to the individual mind. Intellect, as the principle, helps in understanding, discriminating and reasoning the responses to the stimuli. The 'ego' or 'I' ness (*ahaṁkāra*) (developed out of association of the Soul with the above items) should be there for the reactions or responses to the stimuli.

The five gross elements, the five sense-organs, mind, intellect and *ahaṁkāra* are the causes (*kāraṇam*) and the effect from them is the *kāryam* (the physical body). *Prakṛti* is responsible for the existence of both the *kāryam* and *kāraṇam.*

In experiencing pleasures and pains, *puruṣa* is said to be the cause. Experience of pleasures and pains is a short form of describing the experiences of *saṁsāra.* Without the soul inside, which acts as the illuminator, *prakṛti* has no life. *Prakṛti* is considered as *jaḍa* (inert) and as such it cannot experience anything. Therefore, *Puruṣa* is said to be the experiencer. Again, *Puruṣa* who is supposed to be experiencing, becomes the *jīva* (ego). *Puruṣa* as such is only a witness and not the experiencer. He is apparently the experiencer because of association with *prakṛti.*

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान्गुणान् ।
कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ॥२१॥
***puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān* |**
***kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgo'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu* ||21||**

The Puruṣa, *seated in* prakṛti *experiences the qualities born of* prakṛti. *Attachment to the qualities is the cause for his birth in good and evil wombs.*

prakṛtisthaḥ: Seated in *prakṛti*.
prakṛtijān: Born of *māyā*.
bhuṅkte: Enjoys.

Puruṣa, as such, is pure Soul who has no attachment to the physical body and the world of plurality. He is only a "witness" (*draṣṭā*). The same *Puruṣa,* or the Soul, when he develops attachment to the qualities born of *prakṛti* (pleasures, pains, sorrow, happiness, etc.) is then called *jīva*. He has now become 'ego', and ignorance due to *guṇa*s born of *māyā*, makes him forget his real nature.

This ego or *jīva* has the feeling of 'I'-ness and 'My'-ness in all actions. It looks for situations that bring happiness which in turn brings sorrows. *Vāsanā*s start accumulating in such a person. Depending on the nature of *vāsanā*s, upon death of that *jīva,* the Soul migrates with *vāsanā*-imprints to find another body or matter to bring new life and starts exhibiting the results of those *vāsanā*s. This continuous process of life and death is called *saṃsāra*.

The *Puruṣa* as *jīva* (ego) is entangled in the whirlpool of *saṃsāra* because of ignorance (of his real nature) and because of attachment to desires. Depending upon the preponderance of the *guṇa*s, i.e., *sattva, rajas, tamas,* he will be born to exhibit such *guṇa*s. This is, what is meant by good and evil wombs. Good and evil wombs is an expression only. It is the good or evil nature expressing itself as new life.

By knowledge (*viveka, jñāna*) and detachment (*vairāgya*), the *jīva* will drop off the shackles of bondage and eventually rediscover his real nature (i.e., *Puruṣa*) and this is called achieving *mokṣa*.

उपद्रष्टानुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः ।
परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन्पुरुषः परः ॥२२॥
upadraṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ |
paramātmeti cāpy ukto dehesmin puruṣaḥ paraḥ ||22||

The Supreme Puruṣa *in this body is also called the witness,* *the one who permits. He is also the supporter, the enjoyer, the great Lord and the Supreme Self.*

upadraṣṭā: Witness.
anumantā: Permitter.
bhartā: Supporter.

Continuing the analysis from the last verse, we can now understand that there are, for discussion and understanding purposes, two *Puruṣa*s. The higher *Puruṣa* is Pure Consciousness. His characteristics are mentioned in this verse.

The lower *puruṣa,* is *jīva* (ego) and we discussed it in the last verse. Each one of us has a pure soul in us which is a witness and we have also the ego, which is the experiencer of qualities.

Upadraṣṭā: It is a *Vedic* word. In all *yajña*s, there is an *upadraṣṭā* who remains as a spectator and watches the proceedings. He does not participate in the act of *yajña.*

Similarly, whatever acts we are performing in this world, the real *Puruṣa* is an *upadraṣṭā*. Suppose, we commit a serious crime. We should not say that the God in us did commit the crime. For all our sinful, criminal acts, the real Self is only a witness and the conditioned soul is the doer of such crime.

If, on the other hand, we do good acts, even though the pure Self is the witness, he will also be an *anumantā* (permitter). Pure Self permits such actions. The conditioned soul will get the benefit of such good acts and will be clearing the path to progress towards liberation (union with Pure Self).

Bhartā: The real Self becomes the supporter of the *jīva* when such *jīva* performs actions in the spirit of *kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu. Jīva* recognising the Soul and working with dedication to the Self, will get the support of the Self.

One can interpret this word in a different way. As long as the acts are performed properly, the Lord supports such acts performed by the *jīva.* If one sows the seeds, he has to fulfil the conditions for germinating the seeds and look after the germinated seed till it grows into a plant. Automatically, by the grace of the real Self, he will get the benefit.

Bhoktā: It means enjoyer. One has to interpret this word properly. He is a witness for all actions and permitter of good actions. Similarly, he is a witness to all actions but enjoyer of good actions. By performing bad actions, one should not say that the pure Self is enjoying such acts. On the other hand, one can say that the Pure Self enjoys the good actions and knows that by good actions, the *jīva* is approaching Him.

Maheśvaraḥ: The real Self is the great Lord, Śrī Kṛṣna. By accepting this statement we know that He is so near to us, inside us really. It is our duty to respect Him always. The respect we show to Him is through our actions. Purity in thought and actions is the way to show our respect to the Maheśvara inside us and also inside every living object.

य एवं वेत्ति पुरुषं प्रकृतिं च गुणैः सह ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते ।।२३।।

ya evaṁ vetti puruṣaṁ prakṛtiṁ ca guṇaiḥ saha |
sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate ||23||

Whoever, in this way knows the Puruṣa *and* prakṛti *with the guṇas, he, in whatsoever way acting, is not born again.*

vartamāna: Present (present actions).

To understand this, we must understand the meaning of the word 'witness'. Who is a witness? A witness is a person who is at the scene of a particular event and has seen what has happened. We see this situation in our courts all the time. The lawyers call for eye-witnesses to support their clients.

The opinion of a neutral witness carries more validity than that of a biased witness. A neutral witness has no connection with the contending parties. He was standing apart from the events at the scene. Because he was not involved in the events, he can give an unbiased report. If he were not neutral, and were in some way connected with one of the parties, his understanding of the events would have been biased towards the party he was connected with.

Similarly, the *jīva* who really knows the nature of the *Puruṣa* (the witness) and also realises his *jiva* and the *guṇas* will not perform acts that are criminal or sinful (according to *śāstras*). The *jīva* knows that the true witness, the Lord, is there and he will have no one to support his bad actions. For only such a person, the Lord says that there is no birth. He attains *mokṣa.* Such a person has burnt out all his existing *vāsanās* and will not have accumulated new *vāsanās.* He is acting according to his conscience.

Sarvathā vartamāno'pi: When the Lord says "In whatsoever way he acts at present", He does not mean action in a way contradictory to the laws of scriptures. All through the *Gītā*, He stresses that actions must be according to the *śāstras*. Whether one is a butcher, hangman, judge (giving out punishment), as long as one is aware of the Lord inside him, he is not bound by his actions. He is ever free.

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।
अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥२४॥
dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā |
anye sāṁkhyena yogena karmayogena cāpare ||24||

Some see the ātmā *in themselves with purified mind by* dhyānā-yoga, *others by the* yoga *of knowledge and yet others by* karma-yoga.

kecit: Some.
apare: Some others.

The Lord in this and the next verse suggests the different paths to attain *mokṣa.* The three paths mentioned here have already been discussed before in detail.

We have learnt that our existing *vāsanās* give us the mental predisposition to the life we follow now. Even in spiritual progress, different people have different predispositions. Depending on that, they find it easy to go along a particular path.

Dhyāna-yoga is possible for those who have the least agitations in their mind. Their mind is a calm ocean with the least amount of disturbances from the outer world. They are able to meditate on the inner Self. It is said that they see the great *ātmā* in themselves. It does not mean that they physically see it. They can see it with the eye of wisdom. They have developed such a perfect state of purity of mind that they can see the Lord intellectually. This is the final result achieved by a perfect *dhyāna-yogī*.

Others can see the Lord through *sāṃkhya-yoga*. *Sāṃkhya-yoga* is considered as the *yoga* of knowledge. The aspirants who follow this path, attain knowledge by a deep study of the *śāstra*s. They analyse what they study and attain a definite understanding of the *ātman*. Instead of meditating, they are more enthusiastic in getting at scriptures and studying them. They go to learned scholars and discuss what they have learnt. Eventually they also see the Lord with their clear intellectual understanding.

Karma-yoga is for those whose *vāsanā*s make them active in their actions. They are restless people who want to be 'on the go' always. They do not find peace through meditation or reading scriptures. Such people, in their search for seeing the Lord, perform *niṣkāma karma* and *karmaphala-tyāga*.

In short, for one to follow any one of these paths, it is the temperament of that person that dictates the path to take. One should not condemn the paths taken by others which are different to the path taken by him. One should not force others to follow any particular path.

Whatever path one follows, the aim is to achieve the burning of all existing *vāsanā*s and not accumulating new *vāsanā*s. The end-result is understanding and realising the true nature of the Lord inside us and inside all others.

One can note the absence of *bhakti-yoga* in this verse. It is not proper to analyse it to question why it is not mentioned. As we know, *bhakti* or love to God is essential to follow any of the above paths. Also, there are some people who show their devotion by *bhakti-mārga* as discussed in chapter 12.

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥२५॥

anye tv evam ajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate |
te'pi cātitaranty eva mṛtyuṁ śrutiparāyaṇāḥ ||25||

Yet others, not knowing (the God) in this way, worship, having heard (of it) from others. Believing sincerely what they have heard as the Supreme, they also cross over death.

anyebhyaḥ: From others.
atitaranti: Cross over.

There are very few people who really aspire to liberation and have the capacity to do so by the methods described above.

What about the rest of us? Have we no way of attaining liberation? The Lord answers this question. Let us take an example. A grown up, mature person will follow what he has learnt in his earlier life, and will make his own decisions and attain success in his life. He will get what he wants to enjoy in his life, by following the path he likes and which suits him after having learnt from others in the younger days. There are others who cannot take such decisions. They are not so grown up mentally. They can also attain success, if they listen to the advice of elders and learned people who are interested in their welfare. Such people must have faith in what others advise and devotedly follow what they advise.

Similarly, for those who cannot follow the three paths, the Lord has given another path. This path is *upāsanā* (worship, meditation). By having faith in what the *guru*s and elders say about the Lord, by worshipping with devotion what has been said, they can also cross over death. They are like those who are ill, know they are ill, go to the doctor, get the medicine prescribed, take it and get cured.

What is death? It is said that they too "cross over death". Death means liberation from the pains and sorrows of the existing life. Instead of getting depressed at the pains they suffer, they find peace during their troubled times. They are freed from the bondage to their physical body and their surroundings; in other words, freedom from *saṁsāra*.

Death can also be defined as the principle of change experienced at the mental and intellectual level. If the person has reached a level of intellectual maturity in his path towards realisation of the Lord in himself and others, that experience will not die. This is another way of explaining it.

> यावत्सञ्जायते किञ्चित्सत्त्वं स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।
> क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञसंयोगात्तद्विद्धि भरतर्षभ ॥२६॥
> ***yāvat sañjāyate kiñcit sattvaṁ sthāvara-jaṅgamam |***
> ***kṣetrakṣetrajña-saṁyogāt tad viddhi bharatarṣabha ||26||***

O best of Bharatas, whatever being, moving or unmoving is born in this world, know that to have been produced from the union of kṣetra *and* kṣetrajña.

sthāvara-jaṅgamam: The moving and unmoving.
saṁjāyate: Is born.
viddhi: Know.

A locomotive is in action if the steam generated is made to pass through the engine. The steam has to have the medium of the engine to show its power. The steam identifying with the engine is a happy, running locomotive train. The engine is after all inert matter that comes to life in association with steam.

Similarly, the knower of the field has to associate himself with the field and that is how both moving and unmoving things are born. Once the association takes place, with the identification developed (*nāma* and *rūpa*), it becomes the ego. To realise God is to dissociate oneself from this attachment.

> समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।
> विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥२७॥
> ***samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram |***
> ***vinaśyatsv avinaśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||27||***

One who sees the Supreme Lord equally in all beings, the unperishing wihin the perishing, he indeed sees.

vinaśyatsu: Through the body.
avinaśyantam: Not dying.

This is again a verse stressing *advaita* philosophy. One should be able to recognise the presence of the Lord in all beings including oneself. *Nāma* and *rūpa* should not influence our reactions in the external world. Universal love, universal brotherhood, respect for all living things is essential in spiritual progress.

The body once born goes through the changes or modifications from childhood to old age and physical death. Also it suffers disease during its sojourn. The constant factor all through the changes is 'the Soul' of the person. It remains a witness all through.

Knowing this, the *sādhaka* should maintain the inner vision of the Lord always and not get affected by external modifications.

One who sees this is the one who has developed an inner eye of wisdom and understands the true nature of the Lord.

समं पश्यन्हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम् ।
न हिनस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥२८॥

samaṁ paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram |
na hinasty ātmanātmānaṁ tato yāti parāṁ gatim ||28||

Seeing the same Lord everywhere equally dwelling, he does not destroy the Self by the Self, he attains the Supreme Goal.

na hinasti: Does not destroy.

Samaṁ sarvatra samavasthitam: Again this is stressing the *advaita* philosophy. The Lord is *samam* (same equally) *sarvatra* in all beings. *Samavasthitam* is equally present.

The Lord who is present in all beings is the same. The Lord in a *jīvanmukta* is no greater compared to the indwelling Lord in a sinner. The *jīvanmukta* exhibits the Lord in all his actions. The reflecting medium in a *jīvanmukta* is so clear that the Lord shines through brilliantly. The medium in a sinner is so befogged that the Lord is not seen at all. Therefore there is even a doubt (in ignorant people) about the existence of the subject of reflection in a sinner. "Does not destroy the Self by the Self". The self with capital 'S' is the real higher *Puruṣa*, i.e., *ātman* or pure Soul. The self with small 's' is the ego (reflected Self). Really speaking there is no such thing as destroying the Self. He is, as we have learnt, 'indestructible'. (What one means is, by forgetting the Self within, the ego can dominate to such an extent that the Self in such a person gets hidden inside the dark room). That ego (*jīva*) goes through so many modifications and suffers the ills of life. The *jīva* or lower *puruṣa* suffers, whereas the higher *Puruṣa* does not suffer.

By constantly keeping the vision of the Universal Lord, and expressing actions that show the presence of Lord everywhere, one attains *mokṣa*.

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।
यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति ।।२९।।

prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ |
yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāraṁ sa paśyati ||29||

One who sees that all actions are performed by prakṛti *only and that the Self is the non-doer* (*actionless*), *he indeed sees.*

prakṛtyā eva: By *prakṛti* only.

The body consisting of the energy (Soul) and the physical equipment functions because of the energy. The outward action is seen to be performed by the body. The body needs the Soul to survive and function. The body cannot say that it is the doer of actions. If it were to say so, that state is called *ahaṁkāra*. The ego of the person makes him say "I did it, I deserve it, I did not deserve it", etc.

In *Praśnopaniṣad*, to one of the questions, the *ṛṣi* Pippalāda gives a beautiful answer in the form of a story (*praśna* 2, verse 1, 2, 3 & 4). The question was, "who among the bodily senses is the greatest; which of the Lord of the senses is greater?"

The *ṛṣi* answers thus: Once upon a time a great controversy arose among various organs as to who among them was greatest. All of them said in the same breath, "we hold the body in our combined grace". Each of them felt that it was great.

Prāṇa, the greatest of them then said thus: "Be not lost in delusion. I alone, dividing myself five-fold, support this body and keep it going."

The organs did not believe it. *Prāṇa* got irritated and made as if to leave the body. When *prāṇa* got up to depart, others immediately had to get up and go too. When *prāṇa* remained in its place, all the others remained in their respective places.

The *sādhaka* who understands this truth and does not attribute bodily manifestations to himself is the real 'seer'. He is fit to attain *mokṣa*. True knowledge is to remember this truth in all physical actions of the body. *Ahaṁkāra* or ego must die.

One can understand it by this example. Bulbs of different wattage shine according to the wattage in the bulb but, the electricity that goes through them all is the same and is of the same voltage.

यदा भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति ।
तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म संपद्यते तदा ॥३०॥

yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati |
tata eva ca vistāraṁ brahma saṁpadyate tadā ||30||

When he sees the manifold world as resting in the one and projecting forth from Him only, he then attains Brahman.

bhūta-pṛthagbhāvam: Idea of beings separate and of many varieties.
vistāram: Spreading.

Can one attain *mokṣa* at all? When can one attain *mokṣa*? This is answered in this verse.

Mokṣa is not something that one gets after physical death. It is the experience of *ānanda* (bliss) that a person can get during the present life; or to be born again and again till he attains that state in some particular birth.

There is no specific time and date to get it. One has to see the truth of oneness clearly. The Lord says *anupaśyati* (sees well). When one clearly sees the meaning of *advaita* and lives in that experience, he experiences a state of perfect bliss. That experience is known as 'attaining *Brahman*'.

The whole universe of *nāma* and *rūpa* is an apparent existence that has apparently sprung from the Lord. It apparently merges back into the Lord. It is, in other words, like a dream state. I apparently went to my dream-world, had a name and form; on waking up that dream-form apparently merged into me. The dream-form did not exist at all, at any time. During my dream state, I believed in it. I even screamed during my dream when I thought somebody shot me. I am said to be an awakened person when I get out of my dream and realise who I am. Similarly I must be able to see my real Self in me and the same Self in all.

The waves that arise from the ocean appear momentarily to be separate entities, but they lose their individuality as soon as they merge back into the ocean.

Brahma-jñāna means realising this truth of "oneness".

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात्परमात्मायमव्ययः ।
शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥३१॥

anāditvān nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ |
śarīrastho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate ||31||

O Kaunteya; being without beginning, being devoid of qualities, the Paramātmā, the Imperishable, though dwelling in the body, does not act and is not tainted.

It is not an easy verse to understand. It is something that will come in the later stages of *sādhanā*.

Anāditvāt: It has no beginning. It is said to be *anādi*. *Ādi* means beginning. That which has no beginning is *anādi*. In the search for creation, one has to look for cause and effect. It usually becomes a vicious circle like chicken and egg situation.

Somewhere someone has to stop it and say 'this is it'. We can never go back in time, the explanation has to be a theory or hypothesis. This should be a logical explanation.

Taking this theme, our *Vedic ṛṣi*s who also explored the theory of Creation came to a conclusion. They said 'Primordial Energy' was responsible for Creation. According to them, this energy had a desire to create and projected itself as '*Brahman*, the Creator'. Hence the *Brahman* who is in all forms is said to be *anādi*.

Nirguṇatvāt: The pure *Brahman* has no qualities attributable to Him. His modification, the ego (*jīva*) with name and form, apparently exhibits the qualities.

Pure energy that is in the atmosphere, in the earth etc., has no specific qualities. It is changeless and hence cannot have any qualities. The energy which is converted into electricity will have the qualities of electricity. Energy is not caused by anything and hence has no qualities.

Brahman is the *Paramātmā*, the Imperishable. He is the real 'Self' in all. He does not perish when the body perishes. As long as the *jīva* (ego) continues to identify itself with the outer world, the real 'Self' apparently gives life to that *jīva* to fulfil its desires. It remains as a witness all through the *jīva*'s various modifications. The *jīva* has to merge back into *ātmā* (real Self). The *ātmā* then becomes *Paramātmā*.

This real 'Self' is therefore *Paramātmā* hidden in this body. He does not get tainted (*lipyate*) by any of the actions of the *jīva*. *Paramātmā* does not act and does not get tainted by actions. Let us take the example of a judge. A judge awards innumerable sentences to criminals. As a judge, those acts of punishment awarded do not affect the Judge.

Now, we can know why this body is called *kṣetra*. It is a sacred place where resides the *Paramātmā*. One goes from one *kṣetra* (sacred place of pilgrimage) to another to see the deity in that place. But, he forgets his own real *kṣetra* where *Paramātmā* resides is his own body. Hence the one who knows this secret becomes one with *Paramātmā* and gets called *kṣetrajña*.

यथा सर्वगतं सौक्ष्म्यादाकाशं नोपलिप्यते ।
सर्वत्रावस्थितो देहे तथात्मा नोपलिप्यते ॥३२॥

yathā sarvagataṁ saukṣmyād ākāśaṁ nopalipyate |
sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate ||32||

As the all-pervading ether is not tainted because of its subtlety, so too, the Paramātmā, *pervading the body everywhere is not tainted.*

nopalipyate: Not tainted.

The Lord is giving some illustrations to make us understand His nature. What He has given is only an illustration. He has given the example of the sky (the ether). The sky should not be taken as the Lord.

Ākāśa is that which accommodates everything in the universe. It is the subtlest of all gross elements. One can build multistoreyed buildings, bridges, etc. but when one takes them away, the space remains the same. The building of a complex structure does not take the space away. Space remains the same superimposed by the building complex. (If not, we would be producing an area of high pressure by pushing space away and away by constructions.)

Nothing affects space. The clouds come and go in space. Millions of people are born and die but space is still the same. *Ākāśa*, the space, does not get tainted by anything. Dust, fumes, stains from chemicals do not affect the space.

Similarly, the *ātmā* provides accommodation for the body and it pervades the entire body. The body is born and dies and goes through various modifications. But the *ātman* is not tainted by these changes. Our qualities, expressed as actions only affect the *jīva* and do not affect the *ātman*.

Sarvatrāvasthito dehe: *Paramātmā* pervades the whole body. In *advaitic* terms He pervades the single universe of various names and forms.

यथा प्रकाशयत्येकः कृत्स्नं लोकमिमं रविः ।
क्षेत्रं क्षेत्री तथा कृत्स्नं प्रकाशयति भारत ॥३३॥

***yathā prakāśayaty ekaḥ kṛtsnaṁ lokam imaṁ raviḥ* |**
***kṣetraṁ kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṁ prakāśayati bhārata* ||33||**

O Bhārata, just as the one sun illumines the whole world, so also the Lord-of-the-field illumines the whole 'field'.

The last verse was a comparison in relation to the all-pervading nature of the Lord. The Lord is not only all-pervasive but also 'all luminous'. He is the 'Light of Knowledge' in all. He is the 'Life in all'.

The only luminous object we can compare is 'the sun'. The sun is static and the earth moves around on its own and around the sun. So, we have day and night experiences at different parts of the world. Day-and-night changes are not due to the sun, but are due to the changes in position of the earth in relation to the sun.

Similarly, the changes wherein we express our 'Light of Knowledge' are due to the qualities of our *jīva*. The real light of knowledge, the *ātmā*, does not undergo any changes. Light, as such, is the nature of the sun. In its presence or absence, we have light or darkness. The clouds do not take away the light of sun. When the clouds move away, the sunshine is back again.

Similarly, the real light of knowledge is inside all of us. But the clouds of ignorance, due to our *guṇa*s, hide the light of knowledge. If we develop knowledge, kill our dark *guṇa*s, the 'light of the Soul' shines brilliantly. This light of the Soul in us is called 'conscience'.

Every moment a lot of good and bad things go around the world. But the sun is not affected by them. If we live inside a cold house, close the windows and make it dark, we cannot complain that the sun is not blessing us. If we open the windows, the light comes in. We go out of the house and stand in the sun and we get the heat to warm us. Similarly, we should open the windows of knowledge and the light will automatically shine through.

The Soul, like the sun, is only a witness of all bodily actions. The Soul, like the sun can shine through if ignorance due to *guṇa*s is cleared.

Kṛtsnam: It means 'The Whole'. The Soul shines through the entire body in all its states of existence, i.e., wakeful, dream and sleep. The Soul also shines in all periods, namely, the past, present and future. It did shine during the past existence of this body, it shines during the present state and will continue to shine in future states of existence of this body.

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोरेवमन्तरं ज्ञानचक्षुषा ।
भूतप्रकृतिमोक्षं च ये विदुर्यान्ति ते परम् ॥३४॥
kṣetra-kṣetrajñayor evam antaraṁ jñāna-cakṣuṣā |
bhūtaprakṛti-mokṣaṁ ca ye vidur yānti te param ||34||

Those who, with the eye of knowledge, know the difference between the kṣetra *and* kṣetrajña, *and of liberation from the* prakṛti *of being, go to the Supreme.*

antaram: Distinction.
bhūta-prakṛti-mokṣam: Liberation from the *prakṛti* of beings.

We know that the gap between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* is very vast in some respects (due to ignorance). At the same time there is no gap at all because the field is not real. Only with the eye-of-knowledge we can understand the statement "*jagat mithyā*" which means 'The World is an illusion'. Not knowing the truth is called "non-apprehension". Because of this, misrepresentation of truth takes place and it is called 'misapprehension'. Due to ignorance, on account of the nature of *guṇas*, the ego forgets the Self (non-apprehension) and in turn lives in a dream-world (misapprehension).

The ego, by wiping out the *vāsanās* can realise the mistake and merge back into the *ātmā*. By the knowledge and acquiring the wisdom (*jñāna-vijñāna*) gained by discrimination between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, the *sādhaka* attains final liberation. He is then called a *jīvanmukta*.

The Lord bestows this knowledge on devotees who worship Him with faith and love. He gives *buddhi,* and *buddhi-yoga* gives liberation.

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञविभागयोगो नाम त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः ॥

iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ yogaśāstre
śrīkṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde kṣetra-kṣetrajña-vibhāga-yogo
nāma trayodaśo'dhyāyaḥ **॥**

CHAPTER 14

GUṆATRAYA-VIBHĀGA-YOGA

Guṇa means quality. *Traya* means three. This chapter deals with three qualities with which all the beings in the universe are born. The Lord has in great detail divided the three *guṇas* separately and given an exhaustive description of each of these qualities.

By giving a description of each of the three *guṇa*s, the Lord has given the seeker, the means for analysing himself. Self-diagnosis helps the seeker to attain the necessary qualities and unite with the *ātman* (*yoga*). Hence this chapter is entitled *guṇatraya-vibhāga-yoga.*

Each of us has the *ātman* or Soul inside us and outside we have the physical body that envelops the *ātman*. The *ātman* inside is the same in all. The physical body outside is made up of the same five elements, namely, the earth, water, fire, air and ether (sky).

So, what are the differences we are talking of? Between the Soul and physical body, we have the mind and intellect. The mind is the one that exhibits these qualities. The mental qualities of the individuals are called the *guṇa*s.

The *ātman* identifying itself with the body becomes *jīva* and is the ego. The sense-organs bring impulses that stimulate the mind to react. The thoughts that originate in our minds leave an imprint called *vāsanā*s. Whatever thoughts we develop do certainly leave an imprint. Many of them turn out to become actions and thereby wipe off the old imprints. Some *vāsanā*s do not turn into actions but remain as imprints. The results of actions in turn bring more desires and leave new imprints. This process goes on all through one's life. On physical death, the *ātman* departs with the mind and its *vāsanā*s. It cannot get release to join the *Paramātmā* till all the *vāsanā*s are burnt and new *vāsanā*s are not introduced.

The departed soul then through the medium of the five elements again starts a new life. The *vāsanā*s that were carried over, form the basis of qualities of the new born. The purpose of the new life is to burn all past desires. If the new *jīva* realises this, it will make attempts towards achieving spiritual liberation. On the other hand, if it continues to live in ignorance it will suffer and keep on accumulating *vāsanās*. It will go through the cycle of births and deaths and is said to be caught in the whirlpool of *saṁsāra*.

The desires of the past, which are not fulfilled then dictate the behaviour of that person. The qualities of action to fulfil desires vary broadly into three categories called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. We are going to learn about these in this chapter.

This will help us to re-adjust our life wherein we can try not to allow more desires to enter our minds. This can be compared to a car and its engine and working parts. We have to keep the car in perfect working order to make it perform a smooth journey to reach our destination. We can, if we know about the basics of a car, lift the bonnet and see the engine. We can, as far as our knowledge of it goes, see if all is well or if it needs some touching up or needs to go to a mechanic for repair.

Similarly, we must first of all know where we want to go in our life. Next we must know a little about the functions and qualities of our mind that are needed for the journey. Later on, we can adjust some of our qualities ourselves and we may go to spiritual teacher who will help us in repairing or healing our mind. Then we can continue with our journey. We may, literally speaking, need to have a new vehicle half-way through to reach our destination.

This chapter is for those who want to make spiritual progress in their lives. It is for those who want to analyse themselves and see how fit they are for the journey and what adjustments they have to make in their qualities.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
परं भूयः प्रवक्ष्यामि ज्ञानानां ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा मुनयः सर्वे परां सिद्धिमितो गताः ॥१॥

śrī bhagavān uvāca
paraṁ bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṁ jñānam uttamam |
yaj jñātvā munayaḥ sarve parāṁ siddhim ito gatāḥ ||1||

The Lord said

I will a gain declare that supreme wisdom, the best of all knowledge, which having known, all the sages have attained the supreme perfection after this life.

pravakṣyāmi: I will tell.
bhūyaḥ: Again.

The Lord says He will declare again the path to *mokṣa*. He has already given various paths towards *mokṣa*. He also says that He will declare that knowledge, the best of all knowledge. Does it mean that all other paths are not the best? Has He not already said that *bhakti, jñāna, karma* and *dhyāna* are the best?

Let us analyse this paradoxical statement. Who needs to be repeatedly told of the same thing again and again? Who needs to be taught how to write the alphabet again and again? A child needs repeated teaching on the same alphabet. Similarly, children on the spiritual path need repeated reminders on the same subject. The Lord is giving us (the children in relation to our spiritual maturity) repeated reminders on *mokṣa*.

All the paths given before are good paths. But any individual in any path must know the vagaries of his mind. The horses of his chariot in the path to *mokṣa* need to have blinkers and a charioteer to hold the reins. The individual must know the nature of his mind (horses) and know how to control his mind. That is why, the Lord says that this, the knowledge of the three *guṇa*s, is the best.

The Lord gives the example of *muni*s who attained perfection. One can ask how do we know where the *muni*s went? We do not know, is the perfect answer. So, instead of going on that line of questioning, let us ask 'who is a *muni*'? A *muni* is *mananaśīla.* He contemplates and reflects upon his thoughts. He contemplates on all thoughts his mind gets and reflects upon them. In other words, he analyses his *guṇa*s and tunes himself to the right qualities.

Lastly, the Lord says that the *muni*s have reached perfection after this life. It does not mean after physical death. It means after the death of the ego and its misconceptions.

इदं ज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य मम साधर्म्यमागताः ।
सर्गेऽपि नोपजायन्ते प्रलये न व्यथन्ति च ॥२॥

***idaṁ jñānam upāśritya mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ* I**
***sarge'pi no'pajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca* II2II**

Taking refuge in this wisdom, they attain My being, they are neither born at the time of creation nor are they destroyed at the time of dissolution.

sādharmyam: Union with Me.
sarge api: At the time of creation also.
na upajāyante: Are not born.
na vyathanti: Do not perish.

Continuing the theme of the last verse, the Lord starts of by saying about those *muni*s who have taken refuge in the knowledge given by the Lord. The Lord is preparing us on the topic of *guṇa*s. As we have discussed so far in this chapter, *guṇa*s are qualities of the mind.

The mind, as we know, tricks us into thinking and acting on various things. It produces desires, attachments, anger, delusion etc. The result of all these is our attachment to the objects in the world. This, in turn, brings pains and pleasures.

The whole process of creation according to our *śāstra*s began when the Lord desired to create. Our *śāstra*s say that the process of creation and destruction is only a play (*līlā*) of the Lord's mind. If one can transcend the mind, then one will automatically go above the plane of contact with the mind. He is therefore not subject to creation and dissolution. He is not subject to any desires and attachments.

On transcending the mind, realising the Self in us and others, and understanding the nature of the Self, the *sādhaka* becomes a *muni* (*jīvanmukta*). He has no fear of further births and deaths. To develop the necessary strength to conquer the mind, one should know the strategy of the enemy who is diverting us to the opposite path (towards *saṁsāra*). The *guṇa*s which make us behave as we do, should be understood. This chapter is on helping us to know our enemy.

The end-result of conquering the enemy is realising the truth of *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*. The *sādhaka* becomes God Himself. How great it is to know that we, each of us, have a chance given by God to do His duty in this world through our physical bodies. Let us not waste any time. Let us make the universe a happy place to live in by spreading the virtues of the Lord and making everyone rediscover their identity. Let us make the playground of Lord's creation reverberate with merriment and laughter of happiness.

> मम योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म तस्मिन्गर्भं दधाम्यहम् ।
> संभवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ॥३॥
> ***mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbhaṁ dadhāmy aham* |**
> ***saṁbhavaḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ tato bhavati bhārata* ||3||**
>
> *O Bhārata, My womb is the great* Brahman (mūla-prakṛti); *in it, I place the seed of life from which is the birth of all beings.*

In chapter 13, verse 3, the Lord has dwelt on *mūla-prakṛti* or *māyā*. *Prakṛti* or matter as we know is inert (*jaḍa*); it is lifeless. The life-seed planted by the Lord in the *prakṛti* (*mūla-prakṛti*, womb, *māyā*) causes the creation of the universe.

Because the seed of life is planted by the Lord, the Lord is the father of all (*pitāhamasmi jagataḥ*). We are all children of one father, i.e., the Lord. All fellow beings are our brothers and sisters. We should therefore develop universal love and kindness.

The self conditioned by the mind and intellect is "the senses of ego". It manifests as the individual in everyone of us. This emerges through the matter (*prakṛti*) as life. The entire universe comes to life through matter. The universe of names and forms is supported by the conscience. The total universe of all minds and intellects is *mahad Brahman.* In this womb, the Lord puts the seed of life. This dynamises the inert matter and becomes the world of the universe with names and forms.

In other words, the world is full of *vāsanā*s or thought-imprints and their resulting actions. So, the world is said to be controlled by *vāsanā*s. This, in scriptures, is called *māyā* (illusion). The same *māyā* expressed through each of us is then called 'ignorance'. Each of us is under the control of our ignorance and the whole universe is under the control of *māyā*. The light of conscience (knowledge) is the ruler over ignorance and has the power to kill ignorance. The whole universal *māyā* is under the control of the Lord (*Īśvara*) who has the power to destroy the universe.

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः संभवन्ति याः ।
तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता ।।४।।

sarva yoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ saṁbhavanti yāḥ |
tāsāṁ brahma mahad yonir ahaṁ bījapradaḥ pitā ||4||

O Kaunteya, whatsoever forms are born, for them all mūlaprakṛti is the womb and I am the seed-giving father.

yāḥ mūrtayaḥ: Whatever forms.
tāsām: Their

Kṛṣṇa is explaining to Arjuna the process of the birth of the universe and of the birth of individuals. For anything to be born there has to be union between two. As we know *yoga* means union of two. According to scriptures, *yoga* means union of the body with the Soul and of the Soul with *Paramātmā*. Physically, birth of life is from union between the spirit and matter.

As we know, matter (*prakṛti*) is inert and consists of the five great elements. When matter is energised by the Spirit, mind, intellect and *ahaṁkāra* are born out of matter. Viewed thus, matter is womb that is considered as mother and the Spirit as the father. The seed which brings expression of life out of matter is only a tiny spark of the Spirit.

The entire universe of thought-imprints (*vāsanās*) is *mūla prakṛti* or *mahad Brahman.* Without thoughts, actions do not take place. For the universe to be alive and active, we have to have thoughts. All the thought-processes of the entire universe are brought into life by the grace of the Lord. These thought-processes are called *māyā*. So, *māyā* is *mūla-prakṛti* or *mahad Brahman*. Yogeśvara, the Supreme Lord, acts as the seed-giving father and quickens life in the inert universe.

The Lord as the father has expressed Himself as the life-principle of pure awareness in all. But, unfortunately, due to the mind, intellect and *ahaṁkāra*, we forget our original true nature and become ego. The reversal of the process of *yoga* is by the union of the ego back with the pure Soul (awareness). Realising the true nature of oneself and acting the life of the real father, expressing the true nature of the father, should be the aim of all persons.

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ।।५।।

sattvaṁ rajas tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisaṁbhavāḥ |
nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam ||5||

O Arjuna, born of prakṛti, *the three* guṇas, satva, rajas, *and* tamas, *bind the imperishable* jīvātmā *in the body.*

As we have discussed before, the thought-imprints called *vāsanās* have to express themselves as actions. Actions cannot happen unless the inert matter is converted into physical body. The spirit which has the thought-imprints on it dynamises the inert matter; the *vāsanās* are therefore considered as born of *prakṛti*. Without the *prakṛti* the *vāsanās* cannot express themselves.

These thought-imprints could be of pure thoughts which are called *sāttvika*, lazy (impure) thoughts which are called *tāmasika*, and active, passionate thoughts which are called *rājasika*. These three types of tendencies are called *guṇas*. There is no clear way of expressing what *guṇas* mean in the English language.

Once a person is born, the Soul or spirit or *Puruṣa* inside him is bound till his death. We do know that the *Puruṣa* inside is imperishable. He, the Energy, remains the same all through the various modifications of the living body. The actions and thoughts which come out of the egotistic attachment of the Soul to the body, bind the *ātman* (Soul) inside the body. Also, after the physical death of that body, the Soul is not released to join *Paramātmā* till all the *vāsanā*s are burnt. It takes the form of a new life to exhibit the past *vāsanā*s. It is therefore said that the three *guṇa*s bind the *jīvātmā* in the body. The sentence used for this is *dehe dehinam avyayam.*

The Lord is again giving His postal address to His devotees. Do not search for Me everywhere. I am nearest to you, I am inside you, look at Me, release Me from this bondage to the body, is the Lord's message to all.

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् ।
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ।।६।।
tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayam |
sukha-saṅgena badhnāti jñāna-saṅgena cānagha ||6||

O sinless Arjuna, of these, sattva is pure, luminous and untroubled. It binds by attachment to joy and by attachment to knowledge.

anagha: Sinless.
anāmayam: Untroubled.

It is not possible to give an exact definition of *guṇa*s. The thought-imprints in our mind, as they get stronger and stronger, develop emotions. These emotions then result in actions. By observing and analysing the emotions in our mind, we can determine what *guṇa*s we possess.

Each of us has all the three *guṇas,* but only one of them dominates over the other two at any particular time. The dominant *guṇa* over all, in a person, determines what type of person he is. Also, it is a fact that the *guṇa*s due to *māyā* are considered as ignorance or *avidyā*. They bind the Soul to the body. Even pure *guṇa* (sattva) is also *avidyā* because it still carries the *ahaṁbhāvanā* ('I'-ness) in the person.

Let us take the example of light passing through the medium of glass. If it is a dark glass, the reflected light is dim. If it is plain glass the reflected light is clear. It is still not pure light which goes through no barriers. Similarly, the light of knowledge or the spirit has to pass through its attachment to *guṇa*s, including *sattva-guṇa*.

Guṇa is like a rope. The rope of *guṇa*s binds the spirit or *ātmā* inside us. We have to break the knots of the rope to come out of our false identity. *Sattva-guṇa* is pure. There is no impurity in thought. But, the 'I'-ness is not gone. "I want to attain *mokṣa*" is the feeling of a person with *sattva-guṇa*. Because it is pure, like a clear glass, it becomes luminous. The person expresses pure actions that can be seen by all. So it is said to be *prakāśakam*.

It is free from evil (*nirmalam*). The person with *sattva guṇa* has no evil thoughts in his mind. He is pure in thought and action.

Sukha-saṅgena, jñāna-saṅgena badhnāti: It binds the spirit through attachment to knowledge and happiness. Statements like 'I am happy, I have knowledge of this' also show the remnants of ego in the person even though such happiness and knowledge are of the pure type.

When a man has overcome his *rajas* and *tamas,* he is still not united with his Soul. His *sattva-guṇa* too has to be overcome to attain the union.

On a motorway journey in winter, one will come across dense, thick fog or a thin mist of fog. For smooth journey to reach the destination even the mist has to be cleard.

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् ।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥७॥

rajo rāgātmakaṁ viddhi tṛṣṇāsaṅga-samudbhavam |
tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karma-saṅgena dehinam ||7||

O Kaunteya, know that rajo-guṇa is of the nature of pas-

sion for objects, arising from desire and attachment. It binds the jīva by attachment to action.

tṛṣṇā: Thirst.
nibadhnāti: Binds strongly.

Tṛṣṇā means thirst. It is a term used to express desires. This is because, for a thirsty man, there is only one desire. In a desert, on a very hot summer day, thirst for water is the main desire. *Saṅga* means attachment. While *tṛṣṇā* is desire for objects not possessed, *saṅga* is for attachments to objects already possessed. It could be to wealth, fame, territory, family, etc.

Rajo-guṇa is therefore expressed as desire for objects not possessed and attachment to objects possessed. The person is always on the go because desire prompts him into action. Actions bring their own happiness and sorrow. This leads to further desires and actions. He is an ever-active person.

Nibadhnāti: Actions bind such a person very strongly. *Rajo-guṇa* expresses the ego strongly. It makes the *jīva* bound to the physical body so strongly that all actions show the 'I' ness in such a person. It makes the *jīva* act with the idea of "I am the doer". Kṣatriyas or warriors fall under this category. Arjuna is a very good example of a person with *rajo-guṇa*. As we have seen in the first chapter, he used expressions like 'my people', 'I will get sin', my relations, etc. so many times.

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत ॥८॥
tamas tv ajñānajaṁ viddhi mohanaṁ sarvadehinām |
pramādālasya nidrābhis tan nibadhnāti bhārata ||8||

O Bhārata, tamo-guṇa is born of ignorance, and all beings are deluded by it. It binds fast by heedlessness, laziness and sleep.

pramāda: Heedlessness.
ālasya: Laziness.

Tamo-guṇa is born of ignorance. Ignorance of what? Ignorance of the real nature of the Self, ignorance of the 'True Knowledge' he possesses. Ignorance is so strong that knowledge is totally covered (as if by a dense fog) and not seen at all. It makes the person deluded.

Let us take the example of a drunken man or the one under the influence of drugs. He may be a famous person or a rich person. But, once under the influence of alcoholic drinks or drugs, he loses his identity and acts deludedly. He forgets his status, he will be ridiculed by others. They laugh at him. This does not touch him. This is *tamo-guṇa*. This makes the person heedless. He does not know his limitations. A drunken man will think he can walk on water but he cannot even walk straight on a level road. He thinks he can control the car while he is driving in a state of drunkenness (inebriation). This is *pramāda*. He gets into dangerous situations but does not realise it. He is lazy. He does not know his real strength. He never uses it. He puts the least amount of effort in his work.

In other words, a *tāmasika* man is inefficient in his work. He neglects his duty and shirks from work. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, this nature deludes all, including *rājasika* and *sāttvika* people. Laziness even for a short while is enough for one to fall into the trap of *tamo-guṇa*. Hence, the Lord wants us all to be on our guard constantly. We should not forget the divine purpose of our life. We should not have a wrong conception of what and who we are. We should not be blind to the nobler aspirations of our life.

One should also note the word Bhārata in this context. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has used this word to refer to Arjuna several times already. But, it has a special significance in this verse. *Bhā* means 'light' and *rata* means 'desire'. *Bhārata* means one who has a desire for light of knowledge. Arjuna had a desire for knowledge even when he was in a state of hysterical despair.

We, like Arjuna, should not get despondent in any kind of situation in life. We must possess desire for knowledge and develop attachment to it (*jñāna-saṅga*).

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सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।
ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत ॥९॥
sattvaṁ sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata |
jñānam āvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayaty uta ||9||

Sattva *binds one to happiness and* rajas *to action. O Bhārata,* tamas, *by covering knowledge, attaches one to heedlessness.*

This is a summary of the above three verses giving mental qualities of a person under the influence of the three *guṇas*.

We have found that *sattva* binds one to happiness. What type of happiness? Happiness can be an account to hundreds of things. *Sāttivic* happiness is that which arises from fulfilling a life of pure living. It is like a scientist finding satisfaction in his work; or an artist when he finishes a painting for which he has worked hard. The thing that makes him not totally pure is the feeling of 'ego' in him. He feels he did it, the sense of 'I'-ness has not gone from his actions. When that 'I'-ness goes, he is said to have reached *śuddha sattva* or pure *sattva* state. Such a person is called *jivanmukta*.

On the other hand, *rajas* binds one to action. The person is constantly on the go to get what he has not got and to safeguard it. *Tāmasika* persons are heedless; heedless of dangers to themselves and also to the "call of higher" in themselves. A man addicted to drugs or alcohol ruins his health. *Tāmasika* person's capacity to discriminate between good and bad is clouded densely. He is inclined towards evil.

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत ।
रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्तथा ॥१०॥
rajas tamaś cābhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata |
rajaḥ sattvaṁ tamaś caiva tamaḥ sattvaṁ rajas tathā ||10||

O Bhārata, sattva *rises having overpowered* rajas *and* tamas, rajas *functions having overpowered* sattva *and* tamas, *so also* tamas *functions having overpowered* sattva *and* rajas.

abhibhūya: Having over-powered.
bhavati: Arises.

All of us have the three *guṇa*s in us. By and large, there is preponderance of one *guṇa* in us and we are said to be generally of that type. But, at the same time, other *guṇa*s also are expressed by our actions. We can express only one *guṇa* at any one time. At that time, that other *guṇa*s which are in us, do not manifest themselves in actions.

For example, when we go to the temple, we can see the predominance of *sattva-guṇa* in most of the devotees at the sight of the idol of God. It does not mean they are all of *sāttvika* type. At that particular moment, their *sāttvika* temperament overpowers the other two *guṇa*s.

We can, by practice, by analysing our *guṇa*s, try to express more and more of *sāttvika guṇa*s by our mind, intellect and our physical actions. This is the way to purify ourselves and bring out the divinity in us.

सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन्प्रकाश उपजायते ।
ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद्विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ॥११॥
sarvadvāreṣu dehe'smin prakāśa upajāyate |
jñānaṁ yadā tadā vidyād vivṛddhaṁ sattvam ity uta ||11||

When through the gateways of all the senses in the body, the light-of-knowledge shines, then it may be known indeed that sattva-guṇa is predominant.

upajāyate: Shines.
vivṛddham: Predominant.
vidyāt: May be known.
uta: Indeed.

Our light-of-knowledge reflects from our intellect. It is our intellect that judges the impulses that reach our mind from sense-organs. Our sense-organs are to be considered as windows-of-knowledge and our pure consciousness (the Self, the Soul) is the light that passes through the intellect.

The knowledge that pours out through the eyes is called power of vision. This illumines the various objects for us. Similarly, the ears are for sound, the tongue for taste and the nose for smell.

Each beam of light from our conscience emerging from each window of sense-organs, illumines one aspect of the world outside. When *sattva-guṇa* is predominating, the light-of-knowledge shines through the gateways. What does it mean?

The speech of a *sāttvika* person will be soft and gentle, he will eat pure food, read good books and listen to gentle, pleasing speech (scriptural discourse, lectures in classrooms, etc.). The actions of such a person show the *sāttvika* quality in him.

When, with the pure knowledge inside us, we illumine efficiently, our gateways or sense-organs and our resulting actions become pure and *sāttvika*. Our eyes then do not see evil, our ears do not hear evil and we do not speak evil.

लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारम्भः कर्मणामशमः स्पृहा ।
रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ॥१२॥

lobhaḥ pravṛttir ārambhaḥ karmaṇām aśamaḥ spṛhā |
rajasy etāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha ||12||

Greed, activity, undertaking of actions, restlessness, longing; all these arise when rajas *is dominating. O best of the Bharata family.*

aśamaḥ: Restless.
spṛhā: Longing.
jāyante: Arise.

We have discussed in verse 7 of this chapter that a *rājasika* person expresses *tṛṣṇā* and *saṅga*. He has a desire to possess what he has not got and he gets attached to what he has. He does not want to let go what he has. Desire becomes inexhaustible in a *rājasika* person. He is always wanting to get one thing or the other. He wants to get more and more of what he has. It leads him to take things from others. This then becomes greed. Greed is unlimited desire. Instead of sharing with others, the *rājasika* person wants things from others. He becomes a selfish, egotistical person. His desires are sometimes prohibited by the *śāstras*. Because of the nature of greed, such a person's mind is agitated with desires. He then become restless. He is said to be enterprising (active). But his enterprise is only undertaken with the intention of fulfilling his personal egotistic desires. He has no time to enjoy what he has but goes after more enjoyments. He develops longing for objects. Not only does such a person disturb his mind constantly, he causes restlessness in his surroundings also.

Duryodhana can be taken as an example of *rājasika* quality. His plans were never-ending. He wanted to acquire land and did not want to part with even five small huts to his cousins, the Pāṇḍavas.

A *rājasika* person cannot sleep peacefully. Even in sleep, his mind will be contemplating on objects of desire and planning to possess the objects. He is frightened of sleeping for long hours because he fears that somebody may snatch what he has got.

अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।
तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन ॥१३॥
aprakāśo'pravṛttiśca pramādo moha eva ca |
tamasy etāni jāyante vivṛddhe kurunandana ||13||

Darkness, laziness, heedlessness and delusion arise when tamas *is dominating, O descendant of Kuru.*

apravṛtti: Inaction

One can understand *tamas* by analysing the state of sleep. When we are asleep, we do not see or hear or smell even though all objects are still around us and there may be sound and smell around us also. This happens because our mind/intellect is not responding to any stimuli. Not only that, our organs of action are not working because they do not get any orders from the mind. A creepy, crawly insect will be able to harm us in our sleep because we are not aware of its coming near us. In a *tāmasika* person, even in the wakeful state, his actions resemble the state of sleep.

Ignorance is his distinguishing quality. His light of conscience cannot shine through his gateways because the intellect is so dark that it cannot reflect the light-of-knowledge. This state is called *aprakāśa*. There is no light shining through him.

He is also inactive (*apravṛtti*). He is idle to the calls of the higher in him. He escapes all responsibilities. He has no enthusiasm to achieve anything. Once his capacity for reasoning is dulled he becomes heedless. He is not aware of dangers that might hurt him by his actions. This leads him into a state of delusion (*moha*). He lives in a constant dream-world. He does not discharge his duties to the society. His understanding of his relationship with the outer world is faulty.

By understanding the nature of the *guṇa*s and where they lead us, we should be able to analyse what we are now, what we were before and what we should be tomorrow. To make our tomorrows bright, we should re-adjust our present.

What is the future for any person? What happens after death? What is the result of the existing *guṇa*s? This is answered in the next few verses. It is better understood by taking up the example of transfers from one place to another in a person's job.

During the present job, one would have kept a bank account for his earnings and expenditure. When he goes to the new place, he is allowed to take only what is left in the balance. He cannot take anything more or less than what was left at the time of transfer. Similarly, after physical death, whatever is left from resulting actions from existing *guṇa*s will be carried forward to the new life. The new life will start with the remaining *vāsanā*s, which could be taken as the balance sheet. If the *vāsanā*s are *sāttvika* he will start with *sāttvika* temperament. Whatever positive and negative thoughts we entertain in our present life, whatever actions we perform, the motive behind actions performed will determine the *guṇa*s in the new birth.

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् ।
तदोत्तमविदां लोकानमलान्प्रतिपद्यते ॥१४॥

yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṁ yāti dehabhṛt |
tadottamavidāṁ lokān amalān pratipadyate ||14||

When sattva-guṇa is predominating, if the jīva *meets death, he will attain the pure worlds of "knowers of the highest".*

dehabhṛt: Jīva.
pratipadyate: Attains.

Dehabhṛt means an embodied being, i.e., *jīva*. The *jīva* is not the body but is holding on to the body. The Pure Self inside us, reflecting through the mind/intellect gets attached to the body and then becomes the *jīva*. It develops the ego and forgets its true nature.

Tenants make use of the house they live in. The *jīva* makes use of the body (house) but he will not be the body. After death, he changes the body just like the tenant finding a new house. Death is something that affects the physical body. The *jīva*, at the time of death, leaves the physical body but still has the subtle body which is the mind/intellect. It means, he leaves with the thought (*vāsanā*s) remaining in the mind.

In other words, it is actually a process of continuity of thoughts. If we analyse our life, we find that every moment is a continuation of the thoughts of the past moments. At any moment there will be an accumulation of thoughts which have not resulted in actions (i.e., unfulfilled thoughts). Life is nothing but actions due to thoughts. It can be called thought-life. In a thought-life, there is always a continuous chain of past, present and future. This continuity is kept up after physical death. The mind of the person does not die. It will survive till it becomes empty of thoughts. If there are no thoughts, then there will not be any actions to follow and there will be no need of the physical body. The physical body is only to fulfil the actions due to thoughts, which, in turn, are due to desires.

So, if at the time of death, *sattva-guṇa* is predominating, it must mean that the *jīva* must have lived the life of *sattva* before death. The *jīva* had acquired the training for *sattva* during its thought-life. He then, is said to attain the pure world of the wise. What does it mean? It means, he will be born in an environment where he can continue his pure thoughts. He will with the advice of the wise, manage to reach the higher level of *śuddha sattva*. He will be able to drop even the feeling of "I want *mokṣa*".

He will stay in the world of the wise hopefully till he attains the state of a *jīvamukta*. The end-result will still depend on new thoughts created in the mind, in the new body. Because the environment is good, it is hoped he will continue the path of ascent.

> रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते ।
> तथा प्रलीनस्तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते ॥१५॥
> **rajasi pralayaṁ gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate |**
> **tathā pralīnas tamasi mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate ||15||**
>
> *Meeting death in* rajas*, he is born among those attached to action. Dying in* tamas*, he is born in the wombs of the senseless.*

A *rājasika* person as we have understood so far, lives a life of constant action. He is always on the go to get something new or to protect what he has. At death he will have plenty of unfulfilled desires. His *jīva* will find an environment wherein he can fulfil those desires. Again, what he does in that life, will dictate his future. If he burns the old thoughts and fulfils the old desires and at the same time entertains new and purer thoughts, he will reach the higher plane of *sāttvika* life.

If one has lived the life of *tamas*, it is said that he will be born in the wombs of the senseless. He will be born a senseless creature, like animals, reptiles, etc. One can also say that he will be born to live like a senseless animal. He will live a wretched life. Again, what he does in the new life will decide his future.

Can we understand sometimes from what we have learnt so far? What will be my future is the common question for many of us. We go to palmists, astrologers, etc. to find out our future. Really speaking, by reading and understanding our *guṇa*s, we should be able to predict our future. We are the only ones who know what thoughts we have enertained in our minds. Scriptures and the *Gītā* tell us what are the results of our present thoughts.

It is therefore up to us to plan our future. By developing *bhakti, vairāgya* and *jñāna* we can uplift ourselves.

कर्मणः सुकृतस्याहुः सात्त्विकं निर्मलं फलम् ।
रजसस्तु फलं दुःखमज्ञानं तमसः फलम् ॥१६॥
karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sāttvikaṁ nirmalaṁ phalam ।
rajasas tu phalaṁ duḥkham ajñānaṁ tamasaḥ phalam ॥16॥

The fruit of good action of sattva *is pure. The fruit of* rajas *is suffering and the fruit of* tamas *is ignorance.*

sukṛtasya karmaṇaḥ: Of good actions.

This is the summary of the last two verses. Here, one can ask a question. If we already have the *vāsanā*-imprints, we are bound to act according to our *vāsanā*s. How can we change? The answer is simple. That is why religions exist. Religious philosophies all over the world advise people on the ways to live the present life. The purpose of religion is to make the world a better, peaceful, pure, happy place to live in for all. It is we who make the world and we should therefore develop those qualities in us.

We are the ones who bring forth new offspring into this world. There is a period in everybody's life where they are called children. The children are like new growing seeds. The gardener can direct the growing plants the way he thinks it is right. He will clear all the weeds from the vicinity of the seeds. We should do the same with our children. We should avoid the child from getting into bad company. We should instill respect, truthfulness, morality, good habits, etc. in our children. Our children are the future citizens of this world. The efforts by us (*karma*) to bring up our children, should bring its own fruit (*phala*) that will reflect in a better or a bad world of tomorrow. We should also show our children the right path by our actions. After all, children are copy cats. We should live that life which we want our children to live. Religious education should play a greater part in a child's life both at home and at school. By *abhyāsa,* one can control one's mind. Constant practice at disciplining the mind will eventually help us not to develop new *vāsanā*s and to burn existing *vāsanā*s. Fruits of good action are happiness and purity. Peace and joy reverberate where there is predominance of *sattva.*

We already know that *kāma* and *krodha* arise from *rajas*. We also know that they result in self-destruction. So, the end-result of *rajas* is pain. If everyone of us acts selfishly to fulfil our desires and if we act greedily to grab what does not belong to us, of course it will end in pain and suffering for all.

Tamo-guṇa is ignorance and ends in ignorance. It is very hard to come out of lazy, idle habits. It is important that we should be strict in bringing up our children. We should not let them develop selfishness and laziness. We should make them read good books, play decent games and not idle away their time. Teaching *abhyāsa-yoga* from childhood is the only way to pull them out of *tamo-guṇa*.

सत्त्वात्सञ्जायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।
प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥१७॥
sattvāt sañjāyate jñānaṁ rajaso lobha eva ca I
pramādamohau tamaso bhavato'jñānam eva ca II17II

From sattva *arises knowledge, greed from* rajas; *heedlessness,* moha *and ignorance arise from* tamas.

sañjāyate: Arises.

The Lord, briefly explains as to what arises from each of the three *guṇa*s.

As *sattva* is nearest to the *ātmā* and pure, in course of time one would be expected to gain wisdom, and achieve liberation. When one is climbing up a hill, the nearer one is to the top of the mountain, that much better view of the top can be had for the climber. He still cannot get a real picture but he is nearest to getting the picture. Because the reflecting medium is clear, the person with *sattva-guṇa* can attain *jñāna*. He is nearer to the top of the ladder of spiritual perfection.

Kāma and *krodha* arise from *rajo-guṇa. Kāma* leads to greed. A *rājasika* person becomes greedy. A *tāmasika* person continues to live the life of ignorance. His power of discrimination is wrong. He stays at the foot of the mountain, because he is lazy to climb up to the top; he has no idea at all of what one can see from the top. His ignorance leads him to situations where he injures himself.

ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्वस्था मध्ये तिष्ठन्ति राजसाः ।
जघन्यगुणवृत्तिस्था अधो गच्छन्ति तामसाः ॥१८॥
***ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ* |**
***jaghanya-guṇa-vṛttisthā adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ* ||18||**

Those who are sāttvika *go upwards, the* rājasika *dwell in the middle and the* tāmasika, *abiding in the function of the lowest* guṇa, *go downwards.*

tiṣṭhanti: Dwell.
jaghanya: Lowest.

What is the future of any person? It depends on his existing *guṇas*. The future does not mean 'after death'. It can be defined as a stage in life when there is a change in the person. This change, of course, includes physical death of the body as well. Teenage is the future of childhood, middle age is the future of teenage and childhood; old age is the future of all the three stages. Death is the future of all the four stages.

Mentally, the future is when there are changes in mental perception. A person with *sāttvika* nature will, by his efforts, go upwards (i.e., towards liberation). He will be able to free himself from bondages of pains and sorrows (*saṁsāra*). He will go to heaven, is a common saying. A *rājasika* person will remain bound to the pains and sorrows of life. He is bound to the cycle of *saṁsāra*. A *tāmasika* person goes down to lower and lower levels of existence.

As we have discussed before, all the three *guṇa*s bind us in one form or another. The process of release from the bondage is called 'liberation' or *mokṣa*. It is up to us to see where we are in the 'path to liberation'. Once we have an idea of *mokṣa*, we can start analysing our *guṇa*s. This process does not happen overnight.

If our elders instil the idea of God and liberation when we are young, if they instil the idea of discipline by constant practice, we would find the future path easy. We have seen young internationally famous sports stars. How did they achieve it? By their elders' insistence on practice and discipline. We should do so at the spiritual level also. Nobody is said to be too young to understand God.

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति ।
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ॥१९॥

nānyaṁ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṁ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati |
guṇebhyaśca paraṁ vetti madbhāvaṁ so'dhigacchati ||19||

The seer who sees no agent other than the guṇas *and knows that which is higher than the* guṇas, *he attains to My being.*

draṣṭā: Seer.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving a picture of transcendental meditation.

The questions one has to ask oneself are: (1) Who am I? (2) What am I doing? (3) Why am I doing this?

All actions performed are due to *guṇa*s. There are two entities in each of us: the *ātman* and the body. All actions are performed by the body. Bodily functions are carried out under the supervision of the mind. The mind is the seat of the *guṇa*s. The agent for all our bodily actions is therefore the *guṇa*s. It is our desires of the past which we are fulfilling now. We are supposed to see this truth. The truth is that there is no agent other than *guṇa*s in all our actions. Our desires are expressed through our agent, namely, the *guṇa*s.

The real person in us, the *puruṣa,* is the *ātman.* He is above desires. We have developed a wrong sense of attachment mistaking the body to be *ātman* and so we express our ego in our actions. We cannot see the *ātman* in us. We can, through meditation, experience the *ātman* inside us. Our mind due to ego binds us. We can liberate ourselves from the *guṇa*s, i.e., desires.

Who am I? I am the *ātman,* separate from the *guṇa*s. I am not the agen (*kartā*) and I am not the enjoyer (*bhoktā*). I am only a witness. If I know this truth I can attain 'My being' myself. I can become God.

What am I doing? Why am I doing this? I should be able to analyse my actions. I should know what is making me carry on with my actions. When I look and understand what the *guṇa*s are doing, I can try to escape from the shackles of life by avoiding further desires.

In the theatre of life, on the stage, *ātmā* shines like the light on the stage. It is not attached to, or affected by, events on the stage. We *nara*s, can become Nārāyaṇa. The process is a gradual one. It starts by questioning ourselves as to who we are. By dropping the ego, by knowing that *guṇa*s are the cause of all actions, we are approaching nearer the stage of becoming Nārāyaṇa.

Once we totally drop the ego, the Lord says, we will achieve "*madbhāva*" ('My being'). If we can transcend our mind, we can rediscover our real status. We can become the *Paramātmā.*

गुणानेतानतीत्य त्रीन्देही देहसमुद्भवान् ।
जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते ॥२०॥
guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī deha-samudbhavān |
janma-mṛtyu-jarā-duḥkhair vimukto'mṛtam aśnute ||20||

Having transcended the three guṇas *which are the cause for the birth of the body, the* jīva *is freed from birth, death, decay and pain.*

dehasamudbhavān: Cause of the body.
aśnute: Attains.

We have discussed already about the nature of the *guṇa*s and the process of birth of any person. The *guṇa*s are *vāsanā*s, and *vāsanā*s are thought-imprints. Thought-imprints are due to desires. Desires are due to attachment to the world on account of our contact with the sense-organs. Our life is full of actions. Actions fulfil our desires.

It is therefore said that the *guṇa*s are the cause of births. If there are no desires left, then there is no birth. Even the *sāttvika* person has to be born because he has a desire to achieve liberation. Unfortunately, after being born, we forget our past. We are caught in the trap, we go through the process of ageing and in the process suffer diseases, birth, death, decay and pain which are part and parcel of the physical body's progress in life. We all celebrate new births. Unfortunately, we do not realise the decay, pain and death that the new baby has to suffer in life.

Transcending the *guṇa*s means dropping all desires. In that state one should perform desireless actions. One will attain immortality, the Lord says. We have already discussed this several times. If we do not have any desires, there will not be any births and thereby no suffering in life's progress. Immortality or liberation is a state to be experienced in this present life only. It is not something to get after death of the physical body. It is something to experience after the death of the ego. It cannot be described, it can only be experienced. The sages call that *sat, cit* and *ānanda*. Births and deaths or life's constant changes do not affect such a person.

अर्जुन उवाच
कैर्लिङ्गैस्त्रीन्गुणानेतानतीतो भवति प्रभो ।
किमाचारः कथं चैतांस्त्रीन्गुणानतिवर्तते ॥२१॥

arjuna uvāca
kair liṅgais trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho |
kimācāraḥ kathaṁ cai'tāṁs trīn guṇān ativartate ||2||

Arjuna said

> *O Lord, what are the marks of him who has crossed over the three* guṇas*? What is his conduct and how does he go beyond these three* guṇas*?*
>
> *kair lingaiḥ*: By what marks?

Arjuna in chapter 2 asked Kṛṣṇa the characteristics of a *sthita-prajña*. He is now asking for features of a *guṇātita*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has already described the characteristics of a *sthita-prajña* (chapter 2) *jñānī* (chapter 13) and *bhakta* (chapter 12).

Here Arjuna asks three questions?

(1) Kair lingaiḥ: What are his marks? How can one recognise a *guṇātīta*? A clear understanding of any philosophy helps one to appreciate the philosophy. This will help the person to practise the philosophy in day-to-day life. Just like children copying their parents, we, the children in the spiritual path, should recognise *guṇātītas* so that we can practise their way of life by copying them initially.

(2) Kimācāraḥ: How does a *guṇātīta* relate himself to the outside world? What is his conduct?

(3) Kathaṁ caitānstrīn guṇān ativartate? How does he transcend the three guṇas?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is repeatedly stressing on *sādhanā* and *sādhya*. What to achieve, and how to achieve it? By answering such questions like Arjuna's, He is narrating to us, the readers, the answers. It is to help us to correct ourselves and go on the right path.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव ।
न द्वेष्टि संप्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति ॥२२॥

śrī bhagavān uvāca
prakāśaṁ ca pravṛttiṁ ca moham eva ca pāṇḍava |
na dveṣṭi saṁpravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati ||22||

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते ।
गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते ॥२३॥
udāsīnavad āsīno guṇair yo na vicālyate |
guṇā vartanta ity eva yo'vatiṣṭhati ne 'ṅgate ||23||

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।
तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥२४॥
sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ svasthaḥ sama-loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ |
tulyapriyāpriyo dhīras tulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ ||24||

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।
सर्वारभपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥२५॥
mānāpamānayos tulyas tulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ |
sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate ||25||

The Lord said

When light, activity and delusion present themselves, O Pāṇḍava, he does not hate, and he does not long for them when they are absent.

He, who sits like one unconcerned, unaffected by the guṇas, *knowing that the* guṇas *are functioning and is not moved;*

He is equal-minded in pleasure and pain, dwells in the Self, regards a clod of earth, a stone and gold alike; the same in pleasant and unpleasant things, firm and equal in censure and praise;

He is the same in honour and dishonour, the same towards friends and enemies, abandons all actions. He is said to be a guṇātīta.

saṁpravṛttāni: When they occur.
nivṛttāni: When absent,
avatiṣṭhati: Self-centred.
neṅgate: Does not move.

The main quality of *sattva* is *prakāśa* (light, knowledge), that of *rajas* is *pravṛtti* (action) and that of *tamas* is *moham* (delusion). By bringing in the three main features of the three *guṇa*s, the Lord is referring to the three *guṇa*s. The *sādhaka,* when achieves the state of a *guṇātīta* (transcending the three *guṇa*s), is aware of, which temperament belongs to which *guṇa*s. In any situation, whether it is one which brings happiness or makes one feel like performing actions or makes one deluded, he does not hate for getting that feeling in the mind. On the other hand he is unconcerned. He has already become pure and has acquired knowledge. If any situation brings more knowledge, he takes it. He does not think that he is a *gunātīta* and does not refuse any more knowledge. If any situation brings happiness, he does not hate it but does not feel elated about it. He is neutral to both happiness and sorrow.

As he is a *guṇātīta,* if he has to perform any actions, he will do so because he is still living in the community and has to discharge his duties. He does not perform desire-motivated actions. He himself has no desires. So, there is no such thing as his entertaining *rājasika* qualities. He therefore does not come across any situations wherein he hates *rājasika* actions in himself.

Similarly, as he has acquired knowledge, states of delusion do not affect him. If he senses any *tāmasika* tendency in himself, he immediately takes action to avoid it. It is like walking on a track with thorns. One should not hate the thorns. If he has not other way to go by, he will probably wear protective shoes or remove the thorns that prick him. It is his mistake and not that of the thorn. A *guṇātīta* is therefore said not to hate even when the three *guṇa*s show their presence in him.

Also, when the three *guṇa*s are absent (*nivṛttāni*) he does not wish for their presence in him (*na kāṅkṣati*). He has gone above the state of desire-prone actions. He does not even long for *mokṣa.* He therefore does not wish that he had any of the three *guṇa*s. He has released himself from the shackles of the *guṇa*s and gone above them. He finds peace in himself.

A *guṇātīta* can be called a man-of-perfection. He has achieved perfection by constant practice. He continues to live among people and does not stay in remote areas. A *gunātīta* is one who has not run away from the three *guṇas*. But he is above the three *guṇa*s. He has experienced the *guṇa*s in the past. He therefore has managed not to get agitated when *guṇa*s come near him.

When a person sees a snake, if he stays still and motionless, the snake may even go over him and move away from him. It does not bite him. Similarly, a *guṇātīta* sits motionless when *guṇa*s approach him (*udāsīnavadāsīno*). Whatever situations he comes across, good, bad or indifferent, he is unconcerned but he will do his share of the duty. It is like the screen in a theatre where films are projected. The screen is not affected by the blood stains nor the diamonds projected on it. Similarly a *gunātīta* is not agitated (*guṇair na vicālyate*).

If any agitations come near his mind, he immediately realises that it is the *guṇa*s that have approached him. His intellect will push the mind down and does not let any reactions to sprout from his sense-organs (*guṇa vartana iti eva*: *guṇa*s are functioning only).

Yaḥ avatiṣṭhati neṅgate: He is Self-centred and does not move. He has reached the plane beyond the mind and therefore he can see what is happening down in the mind. He does not come down to the level of the mind. He is firmly concentrating on his true nature, i.e., Self-centred. Not self-centred with a small 's' but with the capital 'S'. He expresses the same nature towards others in the world. He remains like an observer standing in the balcony. He remains in his divine nature (*avatiṣṭhati*). He is like a *sthita-prajña*. As he is sill living in the community, he shows excellent powers of self-control towards any difficulties and dangers to himself and to his people. He will perform his duties with a sense of detachment.

Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ, svasthaḥ: He is equal in happiness and sorrow. He is established in *ātmā* (*svastha*). As he is established in *sat cit* and *ānanda* of the Self, anything that affects his mind, does not disturb him. It can be situations that bring happiness or sorrow. Both are same to him. He knows that they are only a state of his mind and are not permanent. The waves come and go due to the winds, but the ocean remains firm underneath.

Samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ: Material possessions have no interest for him. For him a clod of earth, stone or gold are alike. In childhood, we treasure some items as precious. We have seen children carrying a rag doll and screaming when they cannot find it. As the child grows into adulthood, that object may not appear as precious. It is because of maturity of understanding.

A *guṇātīta* is mentally mature. Hence he does not get the feeling of preciousness of any items. The only thing precious to him is his Self. Even that is not precious because he is already one with the Self and has already achieved that state. Nothing affects him. He is not frightened of anybody stealing his Self because nobody can. The only ones that can steal his Self are his desires and he has transcended the *guṇa*s/desires.

Tulya-priyāpriyaḥ: He is the same towards things that are dear and not dear. This is not in comparison to the *guṇātīta*. It is in comparison to others. What is dear or not dear to others appear as the same to a *guṇātīta*. Living in a palace or a hut does not bother him. The surroundings do not matter to him. He has developed *samatva-bhāva* (equal-mindedness). He remains firm (*niścala, dhīra*).

Tulya-nindātma-saṁstuti: He is the same in censure and praise. He does not get elated when praised nor depressed when censured. His actions are always according to his conscience. He is answerable only to his conscience.

In pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, good and bad, joys and sorrows, we ordinary mortals get entangled. But a *guṇātīta* is free from these entanglements.

Tulyaḥ mānāpamanayoḥ: In honour and dishonour, he is the same. He does not look forward to people giving him titles or bestowing honours. They do not mean anything to him. Similarly if others insult him, he does not care. He carries on his duty towards his Self. To Christ, the crown of thorns was not a dishonour; and if he was crowned with a crown of gold that would not have been an honour either. He would have done his work for the people.

Tulya-mitrāri-pakṣayoḥ: He is the same to friends and enemies. A *guṇātīta* has achieved the state of *advaita*, i.e., oneness.

There is no 'I' as far as he is concerned. Do I hate or love my right hand or my left hand. I care for both my hands. A *guṇātīta* looks upon others as "they are me". He sees he Self in all as Self in him. He may be indifferent to a few but is certainly not an enemy. Anyone can come to him. They are all welcome. He will offer them what he has got.

Sarvārambha-parityāgī: One can say he started any work as long as he has sense of ego in him. I feel I did a particular thing when I think I am the doer. If I am doing God's work where is the sense of 'I'-ness?' I did not do anything but still I continue to do my work,' is the attitude taken up by one who is *guṇātīta*. He does not do any *kāmya karma* whether it is good work or bad work.

Anybody who has achieved this state of perfection is a *guṇātīta*. It is up to us to analyse our *guṇa*s and see if we can reach this state. This state is called the transcendental state and to achieve this one has to learn transcendental meditation. It is not sitting and merely meditating, but developing oneself by self-analysis.

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।
स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान्ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥२६॥
***māṁ ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate* I**
***sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate* II26II**

He who serves Me with unswerving devotion, having crossed the three guṇas, *he is fit to become* Brahman.

avyabhicārena: Undivided.
samatītya: Having crossed.
kalpate: Is fit.

This verse is a prelude to the next chapter.

Even though God is very near to us, because of the powerful nature of the mind it appears that He is far away. We all go to temples or centres of pilgimage to look for Him. We see His idol in those places and put our trust in Him and ask for His grace to help us. Love for God is devotion. The Lord does say 'Worship Me' but He has put an adjunctive before "Worship Me". This adjunctive is *sevā*. *Sevā* is service. Worship Me with service, is the Lord's clear statement.

What does it mean? This brings us to the question as to "where is He"? If we have to serve Him, we must know where He is. Scriptures have told us, Lord Kṛṣṇa has told us that He is inside you, me and everybody in this universe. The life's energy in all is God.

To serve God in Me: I must also serve God inside me. How? By developing an attitude that there is only the Lord and nothing else. I should constantly think of the Lord, His power and glory, beauty and joy, peace and bliss. All my actions should be pure. I should not let the witness inside me see any sinful acts. I must overcome the *tāmasika guṇa* in me and not be idle. I must overcome *rājasika guṇa* by not being egotistic and greedy. I must develop more *sāttvika guṇa* in me. Remembering that God is inside me, I should not let my sense-organs bring in sinful impulses to my mind. My mind should not develop any desires. My conscience should be clear always. By this method I will perform *sevā* to my God. I will be clean always externally and internally.

To serve God around me: As the Lord is in all, I must not hurt anybody. I must share my love with others. I must perform my duty sincerely and truthfully. My conscience should be my guide in my work and in my relation to others. I must do my duty to make the world a better place to live in. Whatever I have got is nothing in comparison to what the Lord has got. The Lord is the most powerful person in the world and my power is only an infinitesimal fragment of His power. All such thoughts should come to me in my relationship with others, including love towards animals.

Just offering prayers is not adequate to get the Lord's grace. Prayers have to be in our thoughts and actions. The Lord also says *avyabhicāreṇa*. It means undivided devotion. A prostitute is called *vyachicāriṇī*. She does not offer her body to one person but to a number of persons. We should show our devotion to the Lord only, and not have love to any material possessions in the world.

By keeping this awareness of God in our minds and by dedicated service, we will be able to cross the oceans of the three *guṇas*. We should reach the *sāttvika* state cross this *sāttvika* also. This is what is meant by *guṇātīta*—going beyond the three *guṇas*.

The result is pure, permanent bliss of God-hood. We will become one with God. We will be fit to become God. This is also called *brahma-jñāna*. If we remember that Arjuna put the question "*kathaṁ caitāns trīn guṇān ativartate*" (how can a person cross over the three *guṇas*?), this verse has given the answer to that question. Devotion, service, acquiring knowledge of *Brahman* — all these make one cross the three *guṇas*.

ब्रह्मणो हि प्रतिष्ठाहममृतस्याव्ययस्य च ।
शाश्वतस्य च धर्मस्य सुखस्यैकान्तिकस्य च ॥२७॥
brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasyāvyayasya ca |
śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca ||27||

For, I am the abode of Brahman, *the Immortal and Immutable, of everlasting* Dharma, *and of absolute bliss.*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that he is *Brahman* and has given the three attributes of *Brahman.*

By crossing the oceans of the three *guṇas*, the *sādhaka* or devotee reaches the abode of *Brahman.* He not only reaches the abode but he will become one with *Paramātmā*. *Jīvātmā* becomes *Paramātmā*. It is said that "one becomes that which one contemplates" (*yadbhāvaṁ tad bhavati*).

Let us take an example. A child seeing her parents would like to become one like them when he or she grows up. Or one might say, "I want to become the prime minister like Mr. X". He/she then, if quite serious, will modify all thoughts and actions. If quite single-minded in their efforts, they achieve what they contemplated. The child is said to have got into the shoes of her parents. Similarly, the true and sincere *sādhaka* becomes *Paramātmā* by merging in Him totally. He has no more ego left in him.

What are the attribute of *Paramātmā*?

(1) He is immortal.
(2) He is eternal *dharma*.
(3) He is absolute bliss.

The Lord is birthless and deathless as we have discussed before. This is the eternal truth and is the *sat*.

The Lord is eternal Dharma: *Dharma* has been described before as follows: "It is that which makes a thing or being what it is". In other words, it is the "law of any being". Without *Brahman* we would not exist. He is inside us all. He is the life spirit in all of us. It is lit by true knowledge of *Brahman*. This aspect is to be considered as *cit*. With the light of knowledge, one can see the *ātman* inside. Once we really know about *Brahman* we will show His presence through our actions. *Cit* is light, i.e., light of *Brahman* inside us.

The Lord is absolute bliss: Once the *sādhaka* can realise the Lord, the bliss he will experience will be absolute. It will not end in sorrow anymore. All happiness one gets from the material world is temporary and ends in sorrow. The happiness one gets on knowing one's true nature and living in that nature is indescribable. It has to be experienced only. Our *ṛṣis* call this state *ānanda*. The Lord, *Paramātmā*, is therefore *sat, cit, ānanda*.

For the sake of worship, to develop bhakti, we give a name and form to *sat, cit, ānanda*. On the other hand forgetting our true nature, we give importance to our name and form. This is ignorance. Dualists who follow the path of *dvaita* accept the *sat cit, ānanda* and emphasise on *ānanda* aspect of *Brahman*. They get immense *ānanda* by singing the glory of the Lord. They are followers of the path of *bhakti*.

The followers of the path of *jñāna* accept the *sat* aspect of *sat, cit* and *ānanda* and emphasise on *cit* aspect of *Brahman*. They have, by knowledge, lit the lamp and expressed the divinity inside.

Really speaking, true knowledge automatically brings a state of bliss. There is no difference between *jñāna* and *bhakti*. Both the paths lead one to 'union with the Lord'. At the end it is *advaita*. There is no difference between the subtle body and the

Soul inside. The body merges into the Soul; the entire universe is only 'one' (*advaita* — not two). This is true *yoga*.

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे गुणत्रयविभागयोगो नाम चतुर्दशोऽध्यायः ।।

iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde guṇatraya-
vibhāga-yogo nāma caturdaśo'dhyāyaḥ **II**

CHAPTER 15

PURUṢOTTAMA-PRĀPTI-YOGA

Puruṣa is the spirit and *prakṛti* is the matter. The matter cannot come to life unless blessed by the *Puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* cannot express Himself in the absence of matter. The union of *Puruṣa* with *prakṛti* is therefore the cause of creation.

The universe is made up of millions of living and non-living, moving and unmoving objects. In all of them there is the spirit of the Lord. It is manifest as life in all living, moving and unmoving objects. At the individual level it is called *jīva*. As the *jīva* is bound to the physical body, he becomes the ego (Self) when he identifies himself with the body and forgets his true nature.

Brahman, the Eternal, is the first and *uttama Puruṣa*. He is manifest as *jīva* in all. The unmanifest *Brahman* is *Puruṣottama*. The aim of the life of every individual is to attain the state of *Puruṣottama*. This chapter is called *Puruṣottama-prāpti-yoga* because it explains how to attain union with *Puruṣottama* and become one with Him. The Lord explains the unknowable with reference to the knowable. He tries to lift us from the known phenomenon to the unknown.

Puruṣottama is the eternal factor which is not conditioned by the world of plurality.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
ऊर्ध्वमूलमधः शाखं अश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ।।१।।

śrī bhagavān uvāca
ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥ-śākham aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyayam |
chandāṁsi yasya parṇāni yas taṁ veda sa vedavit ||1||

The Lord said

They speak of the indestructible aśvattha *free having its roots above and branches below, whose leaves are* Vedas.

He who knows it, is alone the knower of the Vedas.

chandāṁsi: *Vedas.*
parṇāni: The leaves.
ūrdhvamūlam: With the roots above.
adhaḥ-śākham: With branches down.
prāhuḥ: Say.
vedavit: Knower of *Vedas.*

The Lord is comparing the *saṁsāra* to a tree. A tree can be cut off from its attachments. *Saṁsāra* or bondage is due to attachment of (1) the Soul with the body and (2) the body with the material world. The Lord is trying to bring in *vairāgya* which is 'absence of attachment'. The only person who can attain the state of *Paramātmā* is the one who has a true knowledge of his real nature and is free from any form of attachment.

The Lord has compared it to an *aśvattha* tree. It is one of the hardest verses in *Gītā* to understand and interpret, but it is extremely beautiful in its poetic description.

Botanically, the *aśvattha* tree is known as ***Ficus Religiosa*** (*pīpal* tree). It is a large tree. In olden days, when transport by horses was the main mode, the horses used to take shelter under it. The horse in Sanskrit is *aśva* and the tree popularly got the name *ásvattha*.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya gives another explanation to the word *aśvattha*. *Śva* means tomorrow. *Stha* means that which remains. *Śvastha* is that which remains tomorrow. *Aśvattha* is that which does not remain tomorrow. As the *saṁsāra* is there today and is not there tomorrow (at the individual level only) it is said to be *aśvattha*. The *saṁsāra* at the individual level of existence is perishable and we do not know when it may end.

The Lord refers to those who speak of the *aśvattha* tree. He is referring to the ancient *ṛṣis*, the scholars who had analysed *saṁsāra* exhaustively. In *Kaṭhopaniṣad* it is said that "*saṁsāra* has roots above and branches below and this is *aśvattha*, the eternal". The Lord is referring to this description of *saṁsāra* as described in *Kaṭhopaniṣad.*

What is the relationship between the Creator and the created world? How did the spirit manifest as the world of plurality? By comparing to *aśvattha* tree, the Lord is trying to give a comparative analogy. This has been described in the first three verses. The Lord says that the *aśvattha* tree has roots above (*ūrdhvamūlam*). We have to analyse the meaning here.

Paramātmā is the highest source from whom we all have originated. Figuratively we can say that the roots of our lives come down from *Brahman*. When anyone is greater in status or knowledge we generally put them above us, ordinary beings.

The entire universe (*saṁsāra*) has come down from *Brahman*. So, *saṁsāra* is *ūrdhvamūlam*. We are also familiar with the depiction of family tree. We put ourselves at the bottom of the tree. We trace our way back upwards and put our children down below in the diagram. To say that *saṁsāra* has roots above is figurative.

Another explanation can be given of this statement. We are covered by *māyā* (ignorance) and forget our true nature. An ignorant person, we say, does not look anything straight. He sees them upside down. As Patañjali says, the tree of *saṁsāra*, reflected in the waters of the ocean of *saṁsāra* appears upside down.

Adhaḥ-śākham: It has its branches below. The whole world is spread below the abode of *Brahman*. The *saṁsāra* or life which has its roots in *Brahman* has branches below spread all around.

Avyayam: The knowers of *Veda*s say it does not perish. The Lord said it is *aśvattha*, which means it is not there tomorrow. But immediately He says it is *avyaya*. Does it not appear contradictory?

The answer is no, it is not a contradictory statement. The Lord has said: *aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyayam. Prāhuḥ* refers to the elders who gave the *Veda*s. People with knowledge and learning have said so. At the individual level we say that "my life ends tomorrow". But life is an ongoing cycle of births and deaths. The whole world has gone through births and deaths millions of times. It is therefore comparatively not perishing (*avyayam*).

The *pīpal* tree, similarly, in relation to a person's life-span, must have been in existence for generations before and will remain so for many future generations. Comparatively it is *avyayam.* Till knowledge is attained, we swim in the ocean of *saṁsāra* of births and deaths. For ignorant persons it appears like *avyaya* but it is not eternal.

Chandāṁsi yasya parṇāni: The *Veda*s are the leaves for the tree-of-life. *Veda*s, as we learnt, teach the proper ways of action. The whole world lives and survives on action. Continuity of the world is due to action. The moment we all stop doing our work, the world will come to a halt. The *Veda*s teach correct action and tell us not to depend on the fruits of action. Why compare them to leaves? If we know our botany we understand it better. The leaves evaporate the water, this creates osmotic imbalance and the roots absorb water from earth. Cutting leaves would stunt the growth of the tree. In Autumn the leaves drop off and the tree looks bare. In Spring fresh leaves come forth and bring life to the trees.

Similarly, knowledge makes the world beautiful. The *Veda*s give knowledge. Actions arise from the *Veda*s and they bind us to the *saṁsāra.* Our actions are both good and bad and both bind us to the *saṁsāra.* The *Veda*s say that the whole universe was created by *Brahman.* They say He is the father and nourisher.

Now, if we picture this *aśvattha* tree we can see the following:

The roots come from above (*Brahman*). Its trunk is the *buddhi.* Its branches are the universe. Its leaves are *Veda*s. The knowledge to work can be understood by following the teachings of the *Veda*s. Just as leaves protect the tree, the *Veda*s serve to protect the world.

Hence, the person who knows this, is said to be the knower of the *Veda*s. The person is *vetti* or omniscient.

अधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखा गुणप्रवृद्धा विषयप्रवालाः ।
अधश्च मूलान्यनुसंततानि कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्यलोके ॥२॥

adhaś co'rdhvaṁ prasṛtās tasya śākhā
***guṇapravṛddhā viṣayapravālāḥ* |**

adhaś ca mūlāny anusaṁtatāni
karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke ||2||

The branches of this tree are nourished by the guṇas *and the sense-objects are its buds, it spreads downwards and upwards; and below, in the world of men, are stretched forth its roots ending in action.*

guṇa-pravṛddhāḥ: Nourished by the *guṇas*.
viśaya-pravālāḥ: Sense-objects are its tender shoots.
prasṛtāḥ: Spread.
mūlāni: Its roots.
anusaṁtatāni: Are stretched forth.

This is a continuation of the description of the tree of *saṁsāra*. It is to be understood as only a comparison with a touch of poetic beauty. It is not to be taken too literally.

The branches of this tree are nourished by the *guṇa*s: We know that this life of ours is intended to burn out the existing *vāsanā*s. We, in the process of burning existing *vāsanā*s, unfortunately accumulate new *vāsanā*s. These *vāsanā*s are due to desires which, in turn are due to our *saṁskāra*s, i.e., *guṇa*s. *Guṇa*s, as we discussed in chapter 14, are responsible for our actions. *Guṇa*s are therefore taken as comparison to the nourishment to the branches of the tree. The tree shows its life by branching out into new shoots spreading from the trunk. The branches can be compared to the manifold life in the universe and nourishment to sustain the branches comes from the *guṇa*s. If there were no *guṇa*s left, it would be like a state of *pralaya*—there will be no more life coming forth and all existing life gets destoryed. Similarly, if there is no nourishment, the tree in course of time looks bare with no branches and it withers away.

The branches spread upwards and downwards: Each one of us, by acquiring knowledge and by our actions gets suitable rewards. The result is dependent on our actions. We can attain union with *Brahman*, we can reach *Brahmaloka*. We can stay in this world or we can reach the level of lower animals (*pātāla-loka*). They are all due to our actions, which are the result of our *guṇa*s.

Sāttvika actions take us to higher worlds and *tāmasika* actions take us to the lower worlds. Similarly, they say, the branches nourished by the *guṇa*s, spread upwards and downwards. The sense-objects are its tender buds. We do know that the buds are potential branches from the trunk. These are compared to sense-objects because in the presence of an object (desire) we create a new branch of action. Desires win mostly and let us get bound to *saṁsāra*. They bring new *vāsanā* imprints and we have to burn them before we attain liberation. The buds spring forth and spread the life of the tree. It is therefore a good comparison. When we enjoy sense-objects, we are bound by its effects. The tender buds of desire grow into tender shoots and they become strong branches later on. Similarly, if the buds of sprouts from the trunk of a tree are cut, the tree will not survive long. Its roots are extended downwards. We know from the first verse that the main roots are spread above.

Our main bondage is towards *Brahman*, from where we have come forth to this universe. Its secondary roots spread down and get firmly rooted. They, in course of time, grow as strong as the original root. Our tendencies make us get firmly rooted in this cycle of *saṁsāra*. Even though, we have primary connection with *Brahman,* we forget it and get bound to the universe. This ends in our continuing actions. The stronger the roots of a tree, the stronger will be the tree.

Our life gets strong hold in this universe and we start living in ignorance. We forget our true connections and our connections to this world take priority and this is called 'bondage to the world of objects'.

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते नान्तो न चादिर्न च संप्रतिष्ठा ।
अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूलमसङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा ॥३॥

na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate
***nānto na cādir na ca saṁpratiṣṭhā* |**
aśvattham enaṁ suvirūḍhamūlam
***asaṅgaśastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā* ||3||**

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।
तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ।।४।।

tataḥ padaṁ tat parimārgitavyaṁ
***yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ* ।**
tameva cādyaṁ puruṣaṁ prapadye
***yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇi* ॥4॥**

Its form is not perceived here as such. Its beginning, its end and its middle are not seen. Cut asunder this firm-rooted aśvattha *tree of* saṁsāra *with the strong axe of non-attachment.*

Then, that state of Paramātmā, *entering which there is no return, should be sought after. I seek refuge in that primeval* Puruṣa, *from which steamed forth all activity, from time immemorial.*

na upalabhyate: Not perceived.
saṁpratiṣṭhā na ca: Existence also not (seen).
chitvā: having cut asunder.
na nivartante: Do not return.
purāṇī: Beginningless.
pravṛtti: Action.
prasṛtā: Steamed forth.
prapadye: Take refuge in.
parimārgitavyam: Should be sought.

Na rūpam asyeha tathā upalabhyate: The real form of the tree is not perceived in the world. The *aśvattha* tree as a comparison to the world is not understood by us in this world. The majority of us are attached to this world of *saṁsāra* and are ignorant of scriptural teaching and scriptural understanding.

The sense of perception is carried out at the mental plane. The impulses about the world are received by the mind via the sense-organs. The mind also keeps a memory bank of past experiences. Ever so often it dwells in its memory.

The tree, as described in the last verse, represents the entire field of manifested life. We have the capacity to perceive objects, have feelings and emotions and have ideals at the three levels of perception. Due to our *vāsanā*s and ego, we forget the *ātman* inside.

Anybody can visualise the entire universe in the tree of *aśvattha*. It includes past and present and embraces the idea of the entire universe. When we look at any tree, we do not imagine its roots and do not see how deep the roots have gone in. Similarly, we cannot comprehend the entire *saṁsāra* in our minds. It is like trying to comprehend the *viśvarūpa-darśana*. One needs a special eye of knowledge to do that. We should not look at the tree too literally but should try to get the inner meaning.

Na anto an ca ādir na ca saṁpratiṣṭhā: Its end, beginning and existence are not seen. We do not try to see how far the tree has spread through its roots. Our attachments to the world are so strong that we cannot see how deep we have got immersed in the ocean of *saṁsāra*. It is extremely hard to know how many *vāsanā*s are left in our minds. We have to burn all of them. Our life is stretched as far as the length of life needed to burn the *vāsanā*s. It may take several births.

Of course we do not see the beginning of the tree. We never sit back and think when the tree was planted. Nobody gave a date for planting the tree. We do not know when the *saṁsāra* started. All over the world, people are trying to give the dates of origin of different objects of the world. Most of them are speculations.

We do not think of our past. If we could look back, we would shudder at the sight. We also do not see its existence. It means that we do not analyse our existence even in the present form. Why? Because of our ignorance and attachment to the world. We are, by the influence of the *guṇa*s, carried away in the game of life. We have no time to analyse ourselves. For example: We could ask ourselves. Where did I come from? Who am I? What am I doing? Where am I going? Where should I be going?

Suvirūḍhamūlam: This tree of *aśvattha* has been firmly fixed with wide-spreading roots. We have seen instances where the roots of big trees have spread into the foundations of houses causing structural damage. Its roots have spread above the *Brahmaloka* and below into the entire universe. Our roots can be traced to *Brahman* and our attachment to objects spread all over the world.

Asaṅgaśastreṇa: Once we start analysing our existence, we are said to be on the path to *mokṣa*. We, with the help of *gurus* and texts, can then find ways of coming out of the whirlpool of *saṁsāra*.

Once we realise the damages caused by the roots of a tree to a nearyby building, we need to uproot the tree. Any tree can be felled provided we know the strength of its roots.

The Lord says, we can cut this ignorance which has made us get attached to *saṁsāra*. The ignorance is due to our attachment to various objects and also to our own physical body. It is the ego in us. Arjuna's *viṣāda* (in the first chapter) was due to his attachment to his surroundings. Hence, in chapter 2, Śrī Kṛṣṇa told him who the "real Arjuna" was. He said it was his *ātmā* and he said it is the same *ātmā* in all. *Nāma* and *rūpa* have no meaning in spiritual progress. Śrī Kṛṣṇa therefore says, "develop detachment". Only detachment can cut the bondage of *saṁsāra*.

Dṛḍhena chitvā: This *vairāgya* (detachment) should not be temporary. It has to be firm and with a steady intellect. One should constantly use the intellect and follow its instructions. One should develop strong non-attachment to anything in the world both in physical actions and thoughts at the mental level. We should not dwell on the pleasures in our minds. Cut attachment with a determined mind, is the Lord's advice.

The fourth *śloka* describes how to cut it with *vairāgya*. Many of us ask "why should we cut all attachment and what to do next". Our mind needs something to think about. It cannot be left in a "thoughtless" state. *Vairāgya* just eliminates the obstacles in the path. Only when one knows where he wants to reach, he will then try to see what obstacles are in the path and then clear them.

For example, going on a pilgrimage, in the olden days, was ridden with danger. The roads were not made for the journey. For years, people worked on it and built good roads and amenities on the way. The journey to the top of "*saptagirivāsa*, Śrī Veṅkaṭeśa" is made easy nowadays. Why? People had faith in

Lord Veṅkateśa. They wanted to go and have His *darśana* (sight). They had devotion, love and faith in Him. So, they cleared the path. How easy for devotees to go to Tirupati now?

Similarly, we should develop *jñāna* or knowledge of the *ātmā*, of *Puruṣottama*, of the *Paramātmā*. We should know the path, once we reach Him, we will not come back to this world. The path which leads to the abode of *Parama Puruṣa* and from whom the *saṁsāra* has originated, is the one to be taken by all *sādhaka*s.

After dropping the desires of the world, one should develop desire for the higher. Later on, even this desire to attain the higher should not be contemplated by the *sādhaka*. A *jīvanmukta* is one who has no desires left. One would dissolve in *Paramātmā*, like salt dissolving in water.

As the *aśvattha* tree draws its nourishment from the primary roots (in the Lord), we should draw our nourishment from the knowledge of the Lord and sustain ourselves.

Yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī: *Saṁsāra* has streamed forth from the beginningless. The *saṁsāra* or the universe originally projected from the Lord. He is its primary roots.

Tameva ādyam puruṣam prapadye: Take refuge in that primeval *Puruṣa* alone. We should take refuge in *Paramātmā* by devotion, knowledge, *karma* or *dhyāna* and attain union with Him. This is achieving *jīvanmukti* through *brahma-jñāna*.

This chapter is about the *Parama-Puruṣa* and how one could reach Him.

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैर्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥५॥

nirmānamohā jitasaṅgadoṣā
adhyātmanityā vinivṛttakāmāḥ |
dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkhasaṁjñair
gacchanty amūḍhāḥ padam avyayaṁ tat ||5||

Free from pride and delusion, conquering the evil of attachment, dwelling constantly in the Self, freed from the pairs of opposites called pleasure and pain, the undeluded reach the eternal goal.

nirmānamohāḥ: Free from *ahaṁkāra* and delusion.
jitasaṅgadoṣāḥ: Victorious over attachment to the world.
vinivṛtta-kāmāḥ: Free from desires.

Who will try to reach the goal? What qualities do they possess? They are answered in this verse. How a *sādhaka* can attain perfection is brought out here.

Five qualities that are present in the wise, who attain *mokṣa,* are enumerated here.

(1) Nirmānamohāḥ: Free from pride and delusion. What is pride? It is an error or judgement. It is an inflated account of one's own importance. It is a quality that makes the person feel he has achieved something or he has got something which others have not got.

Let us take the example of a person who has become the prime minister of a country. He has achieved something great, no doubt about it. He has probably worked hard to reach that state. But unfortunately, his responsibilities have also increased. He has to maintain a standard of behaviour in keeping with the image of the post and maintain dignity of office. To maintain the responsibility he has to constantly work and do it properly. If he becomes proud and starts thinking that he is great, and that he can do whatever he wants, in course of time he will be made to quit the office in shame. This pride is called *ahaṁkāra*. He gives undue importance to himself. Similarly, on being promoted as head teacher of a school should not make the head teacher dictate terms to all other teachers.

The wise, on attaining peace, do not say, "I have achieved the final liberation, I have nothing else to do". The responsibility of achieving *mokṣa* is enourmous. Look at the responsibility God has got towards the entire mankind. He cannot relax even for a second. The *sādhaka*s also, should not let the pride of achieving a status hinder their progress to achieve higher levels of success. Pride takes one's time away wherein one could have acquired more knowledge.

What is delusion? It is *moha*. It is again an error of judgement about any happenings in relation to the outside world. One starts to live in a false world of imagination. He loses his capacity to face any situation. A drunken man does not really know the dangers he is facing while walking home from a bar. A drug addict does not realise the state of his health. He does not shoulder any responsibility to his family. They may be starving, needing medical attention, etc., but he just ignores it.

Similarly, a *sādhaka*, one achieving something should not be deluded. He should constantly have a clear vision of the path he has taken. A *jīvanmukta* has a clear vision constantly and is neither proud nor deluded.

(2) Jitasaṅgadoṣāḥ: *Saṅga* in this sense is the evil of attachment to the outside world. (Opposite to it, is *sat-saṅga*). It is *doṣa*, i.e., evil. One should win over this evil. Attachments do certainly bring some pleasures but bring more obstacles towards spiritual liberation. One should develop "detachment in attachment".

A *jīvanmukta* should not run away to the forest saying that he has no more responsibilities. Look at God, how great He is. He is carrying out all His duties without getting attached to anybody or any results. The wise men are Godly men and they will do exactly what God is doing. Everyone of us has the potential to become Godly. We are born as 'men' by God's grace and we should make use of our potential to achieve the status of God. Only one type of person can make the world a better place to live. He should not have any selfish motive in what he does. He has no attachment to anything and hence he acts neutrally with the intention of 'universal welfare'. Such a person is called 'a wise man'.

In China, in olden days, there used to be what is called 'wise men' on the other side of a river. People used to go to them to clarify their doubts.

(3) Adhyātmanityāḥ: Dwelling constanly in the Self, the wise constantly remember who they really are and do not let sense-organs and mind cloud heir judgements. If the mind has to keep away from the world of objects, the searchlight of the mind has to be turned inwards towards one's *ātmā*. One cannot keep the mind free from thoughts and desires. There should be initially only one thought and one desire, that is, to meditate on *ātman.* In course of time, the desire to meditate on *ātmā* too should drop. That meditation should become a habit. This is known as *tattva-jñāna.* The Lord has used the word *nitya.* It means, constantly. It is imporatant to keep the thought on *ātmā* constantly (*ātmaniṣṭhā*). From childhood, one should try to concentrate (or meditate) on *bhakti* and good acts and as we mature, we can expect to concentrate more on the God inside us. We cannot develop this habit overnight.

(4) Vinivṛttakāmāḥ: The desires should be completely at rest. Desires as we know are *vāsanā*s in the mind. We also know that there are millions of desires, both small and big in each of us. Every action due to a desire brings more *vāsanā*s. Unless the mind is free from desires one cannot achieve liberation. Liberation from desires should be the first step. This process is called *vāsanā-kṣaya*, i.e., destruction of *vāsanā*s. Initially bad desires should be dropped and in the final stages even good desires, including desire for *mokṣa*, should drop off.

(5) Dvandvairvimuktāḥ: Free from pairs of opposites. Opposites like *sukha, duḥkha* (pleasure and pain) should not be present in a truly wise man. We know that these are reactions at the mental level. What is pleasure now will not remain so tomorrow. It ends up in pain. The pleasure has its share of future pains for a variety of reasons. Attachment (*yoga*) to anything other than the Self brings pleasures followed by pain.

Gacchantyamūḍhāḥ: Undeluded men reach. Who are undeluded men? The wise ones who have the above five qualities. Where do they reach? They reach '*padam avyayam tat*' (that eternal state). The reward for a *sādhaka* for having achieved the five qualities is 'the state of liberation' which is eternal—the wise become one with *Paramātmā.*

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावक : ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥६॥

na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ |
yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama ||6||

Neither the sun is there, nor the moon, nor the fire; having reached which (the wise) return not, that is My supreme abode.

What benefits can one get from achieving liberation and how and 'what is that place', is brought out in this verse. That place is not illumined by the sun, moon or fire. If we look at it, we know that they are the chief sources of light.

Each of our sense-organs has an individual function. Our mind analyses the impulses received and our intellect gives proper judgement. The sun is really an object perceived. Our eyes have to send impulses and our mind then analyses it and says it is the sun. So, the eye is said to illumine the sun. What illumines the eye? The light of conscience or the Soul. Without that life which is the *ātman* inside, eyes cannot function. A dead person's eyes do not see and his ears do not hear.

So, all external objects need light of conscience to see. The conscience (*ātman*) is therefore said to be a place not illumined by the sun, moon or fire. On the contrary, *ātman* illumines all the three and all other objects. That is to say, the *deva*s of sun, moon and fire are not greater than the *Paramātmā*. The goal to reach is the 'conscience' or *ātman*. It is not anywhere outside. It is inside us all.

Physical death is only a phenomenon similar to changing the clothes by the *ātman*. Liberation is a state where there is no more births or deaths, pleasures and pains. Hence it is referrred to as the abode, reaching which there is no return.

On transcending the sense-organs, mind and intellect, one can reach the abode of '*Paramātmā*'. All other experiences in the world have reactions and further experiences (*dvandva*s) except the experience of *ātmā*. This state is called *ātmatṛpti* (peace in oneself).

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः ।
मनःषष्ठानीन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति ॥७॥

mamaivāṁśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ |
manaḥ-ṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati ||7||

Only an eternal portion of Myself, has become the Soul in the world of the living; he draws the five senses, abiding in prakṛti *with mind as the sixth sense.*

jīvabhūtaḥ: Having become a soul.
prakṛtisthāni: Abiding in *prakṛti*.
manaḥṣaṣṭhāni: Mind as the sixth.
karṣati: Draws.

Mamaivāṁśo jīvaloke: We have discussed before what is *jīva*. It is the Soul inside us which has identified itself with the physical world through the body. It is called the ego. the Lord says that the '*jīva*' is nothing but a portion of Himself. As the *Paramātmā* is eternal, the *jīva* is also eternal. All that it has to do is to realise its true nature and merge back into the *Paramātmā*.

Let us take the example of many pots of water reflecting the moon. If the pot shakes, the reflection of the moon also shakes. If the pot is broken, the water disappears into the earth and one cannot see the reflection of the moon. The reflected moon is the *jīva*.

Let us take the example of a house. The space within the four walls is an imaginary space. If the walls are broken, the space of the house disappears. It is the *māyā* due to *guṇa*s that makes us believe that the body is real. This is ignorance or *avidyā*.

This *jīva* is in 'the world of *jīva*s'. So, all the *jīva*s are part of *Paramātmā*. We should remember this truth always. Universal *advaita* philosophy is repeatedly stressed by the Lord. What does the *jīva* do? The five sense-organs have constant contact with the world outside and keep one on the go always. The mind is considered as the sixth sense because it analyses all the impulses received from the sense-organs.

The *jīva* draws (*kṣarati*) the senses to himself along with the mind. The *jīva* therefore claims the body to be his own. The body is only a vehicle (*upādhi*). The *jīva* due to ego, misappropriates the objects in the world and says 'it is mine, so and so is related to me etc.' Really speaking, the title we use like Mr., Mrs., etc. is only for identifying others in relation to daily activities. The wise man knows he is *Paramātmā* and is not drawn into *prakṛti*.

The Lord is emphasising the divine nature of all of us.

शरीरं यदवाप्नोति यच्चाप्युत्क्रामतीश्वरः ।
गृहीत्वैतानि संयाति वायुर्गन्धानिवाशयात् ॥८॥

***śarīraṁ yad avāpnoti yac cāpy utkrāmatīśvaraḥ* ।**
***gṛhītvaitāni saṁyāti vāyur gandhān ivāśayāt* ॥8॥**

When the Lord obtains a body and when He leaves it, He takes these and goes just as the wind takes the scents from their sources.

utkrāmati: Leaves the body.
avāpnoti: Takes.
āśayāt: From their seats.
gṛhītvā: Having taken.
saṁyāti: Goes.

We, as discussed before, are composed of the Soul or *ātman* inside us, with the mind-intellect and the physical body consisting of organs of action and sense-organs. The sense-organs and organs of action are seen and hence they can be called the gross body. The mind and intellect are not seen and are called the subtle body. *Jīva* is the *ātman* identifying itself with the gross and subtle bodies.

When the *ātman* forgets its true nature and enjoys the pleasures and suffers the pains of the gross and subtle bodies, it is called the ego. When the *ātman* retains its nature and keeps the pleasures and the subtle body under its control, it becomes *Īśvara* or *jīvātmā*.

The *jīvātmā* attains the *Paramātmā* state when the subtle body has no *vāsanā*s left. There should be total absence of *vāsanā*s.

While living, we entertain desires and they stay as *vāsanā*s in the subtle body. The *ātman* cannot merge in *Paramātmā* till the desires are burnt out and no new desires enter into the subtle body.

Udāna is a term used to express the function of the department of transport in the body. *Udāna* gives warmth to the body in the living state. At the time of death of the physical body, *udāna* or the fire leaves the body. This makes the dead body cold. *Udāna* has a force, at the time of death, and that carries with it the *ātman* and the subtle body. Physical death does not mean that all *vāsanā*s are burnt. The *ātman* is still bound to the subtle body. The *ātman* with the subtle body goes out with the help of *udāna* to seek the five gross elements, in a suitable enviroment and gets a new life and a body. It is only to help the subtle body to burn out old desires which have remained unfulfilled. Unfortunately, in the new environment and the new body, it forgets its past. If the past *vāsanā*s are pure, in the new environment, the *ātman* will have a chance to free itself. If the past *saṁskāra*s are impure, the *ātman* will remain unliberated for some more *janma*s.

This verse says that when *Īśvara* takes a body (i.e., birth) and when He leaves it (i.e., death) He takes with Him the subtle body. As a comparison, the Lord gives the example of the wind.

Different objects have different scents and some objects have no scent at all. The wind blows from place to place and in its journey it takes the scent with it but leaves the objects behind. The scent is like the subtle body, it is not seen. There are sweet scents and foul scents but the wind has no preference.

Similarly, the Lord carries all desires unfulfilled, both good and bad. The only thing is, depending on the type of desires, He will find a suitable environment to fulfil the desires. For this new birth, in a new place, we use the term '*pūrva-janma-saṁskāra*' i.e., result of past life.

श्रोत्रं चक्षुः स्पर्शनं च रसनं घ्राणमेव च ।
अधिष्ठाय मनश्चायं विषयानुपसेवते ॥९॥

śrotraṁ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṁ ca rasanaṁ ghrāṇam eva ca |
adhiṣṭhāya manaś cāyaṁ viṣayān upasevate ||9||

He enjoys the sense-objects presiding over the ear, eyes, touch, taste and smell and also the mind.

srotram: Ear.
cakṣuḥ: Eyes.
sparśanam: Touch.
rasanam: Taste.
ghrāṇam: Smell.
upasevate: Enjoys.

When the *ātman* becomes the ego, It becomes a living human being and enjoys the pleasures derived from the sense-organs and the mind. As It presides over all sense-organs and the mind, It is also called *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is master over sense - organs and the mind. As long as we rule over our sense-organs and our mind, we are *Īśvara*s.

Once we let the subordinate sense-organs or the mind take over, we lose the state of *Īśvara*. We become ego and are bound to the cycle of *saṁsāra*. The physical body is the vehicle or *upādhi* and the *jīva* is the *udāna*, or the fuel for transport. *Jīva* is independent of the body.

Unfortunately, in the present democratic world where we hate to use the term slavery, we have become slaves to our sense-organs and mind. Where has our conscience gone? Why are we enjoying the life of slaves? Do we not hate slavery? Let us all try to attain freedom. That freedom for us is *mokṣa*.

उत्क्रामन्तं स्थितं वापि भुञ्जानं वा गुणान्वितम् ।
विमूढा नानुपश्यन्ति पश्यन्ति ज्ञानचक्षुषः ॥१०॥

***utkrāmantaṁ sthitaṁ vāpi bhuñjānaṁ vā guṇānvitam* I**
***vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñāna-cakṣuṣaḥ* II10II**

He, who departs, stays and enjoys, who is united with the three guṇas; *the deluded do not see, But those who possess the eye of knowledge, do behold.*

utkrāmantam: Departing (from the body).
guṇānvitam: United with the *guṇa*s.

He, used in this context refers to *ātman*. The *ātman* stays as long as the body lives and He departs when the physical body is dead.

The three *guṇa*s act as a cloud or fog and hide the *ātman*. The ego, because he is united with the *guṇa*s, starts enjoying the illusory world. He is bound by *māyā*. As long as one retains his ego, he is said to be a deluded person. He does not see his own real nature.

With spiritual practice, with the blessings of elders and *guru*s, due to past *saṁskāra*s, one can attain the knowledge of discrimination and realise his true nature. This is called the eye of knowledge. It is not possible to see physically with the eye-of-knowledge. But one can understand with the eye-of-knowledge. This is 'wisdom'. Such a person is called a *jñānī*.

Our intellect is like a searchlight or a mirror. The mirror reflects whatever comes in its field. The searchlight illumines the areas where the light falls.

If our intellect reflects out through our mind, then we see the world as it is now, and we become deluded men. If our intellect reflects the *ātman*, we can see our real nature. We become 'wise men'. Seeing the *ātmā* means realising one's Self. We must (as we are blessed with intellect) find out who we really are and what we are doing here. By discrimination and dispassion we attain 'true knowledge'.

This can be compared to experts in any field of science. For example, when listening to a famous musician, the experts can recognise the finer subtlety of the music. They know the *rāga*s, they realise when the musician changes *rāga*s. They even recognise that the musician has missed a tone or a beat and has slipped in his *rāga*. Not many people in the audience can appreciate this. The majority in the audience are not experts. Because they have a passing interest in music, they come to the concert.

It is up to us to uplift ourselves from the three *guṇa*s and attain the state of *guṇātīta*.

यतन्तो योगिनश्चैनं पश्यन्त्यात्मन्यवस्थितम् ।
यतन्तोऽप्यकृतात्मानो नैनं पश्यन्त्यचेतसः ॥११॥

***yatanto yoginaś cainaṁ paśyanty ātmany avasthitam* |**
***yatantopy akṛtātmāno nainaṁ paśyanty acetasaḥ* ||11||**

The sages, striving, behold Him dwelling in themselves, but the impure and unintelligent though striving, do not behold him.

yatanto: Striving.
akṛtātmānaḥ: The impure.
acetasaḥ: Unintelligent.

There are three essential qualities needed for Self-relisation: (1) *sādhanā* (2) Purity (3) Intelligence. All conditions need to be fulfilled.

One has to strive hard to achieve anything in life. But one must be intelligent to succeed. The person, who is intelligent and pure as well can get the best results.

Let us take a few examples. Let us consider carrying a heavy object. Some may try carrying it but have no physical strength. Some may have strength but not enough of it to carry it from point A to point B. Some will have intelligence to use proper equipment to lift it and shift it.

Let us take another example. A number of people in an office perform routine chores. Some of them by trying, reading books and passing higher examinations reach higher levels of office in their career. Among them a handful can attain the top posts. Among those, a few with pure, unselfish motives tend to perform the best in that new status of office. A selfish person, with impure mind may have achieved the state by dubious means and is bound to fail sooner or later.

A number of students go to college to pass exams and achieve success in life. Among them a few go on to get degrees and higher degrees. But those with pure hearts, with their efforts and guidance from elders, succeed and achieve higher levels of success in life. Pure, unselfish acts do bring happy results in course of time.

Similarly, it is good to have the desire to attain *mokṣa*. But, apart from trying to achieve it by reading, performing *japa*, *tapas*, etc., we need a pure heart as well. We must also be intelligent to understand what we read and hear.

We all have inherent *vāsanā*s, unfulfilled desires. Strong, unfulfilled *rājasika* and *tāmasika guṇa*s taint the mind with impurity. Unless one can do *niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga* one cannot transcend the *guṇa*s. This process will wipe off all impurities. Then our efforts will succeed.

Sages are those who have intelligence, are pure and are trying constantly to learn *brahma-jñāna*. They then become fit to achieve the status of a *jñānī*. They behold the *ātman* inside. Others have no purity and cannot behold the *ātman*. By devotion and *niṣkāma karma* one can reach the path of knowledge where they can see the Self within. We should not be complaining that we perform *pūjā* everyday, we perform *vrata*s all the year round, donate money to so many charities and yet we are not blessed by the Lord. We are deluded if we think that Godhood is achieved by these methods.

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद्भासयतेऽखिलम् ।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम् ॥१२॥

***yadādityagataṁ tejo jagad bhāsayate'khilam* |**
***yac candramasi yac cāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam* ||12||**

That radiance residing in the sun which illumines the whole world, and that which is in the moon and in the fire—know that light to be Mine.

ādityagatam: Residing in the sun.
māmakam: Mine.

In the following four verses, the Lord gives the glory and greatness of *Paramātmā* (which is Himself). To understand this statement, we must dwell on the laws of physics. What makes one see anything? The answer is 'light'. Without light illumining things, we cannot see. We cannot see in the dark. We need daylight which comes from the sun, or artificial light with electricity, or light from a lamp lit with fire, or the clear moonlight.

All of these apply to people with vision. Those who are sleeping or those who have shut their eyes cannot see even if the light is there. Why? The eyes have to take the detailed message of the object to the mind and then only one can see. This is for seeing the objects of the world. One needs some soruce of light to see the object.

The mind needs the Light of Knowledge to understand the message. If this Light of knowledge, (life, conscience) is not there, even in the presence of light one cannot see. So, it is said that the light of Knowledge illumines even the source of light. All the sources of light are said to express their radiance only by the power of the Lord (*ātman*). But *ātmā* is self-luminous. The man with the eye-of-knowledge can see it.

गामाविश्य च भूतानि धारयाम्यहमोजसा ।
पुष्णामि चौषधीः सर्वाः सोमो भूत्वा रसात्मकः ॥१३॥
gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmy aham ojasā ।
puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ ॥13॥

Permeating the earth I support all beings by energy and having become the sapid moon, I nourish all herbs.

gām āviśya: Permeating the earth.
ojasā: With energy.
dhārayāmi: Support.
rasātmakaḥ: Watery.
bhūtvā: Having become.
puṣṇāmi: Nourish.

The Lord is asserting His status as the Primoridal Energy. He is the source of energy for the sun and the moon as well. The life in us, what we call as living, is due to the Lord's energy inside us. This energy has permeated the earth. It means there is energy inside the soil. We have learnt it from our lessons in botany and geology. We try to put articifial manure in the soil to grow our crops. This was not done till about 200-300 years ago. Man and animals have lived for thousands of years nourished by the food which grows from the soil. The energy that is needed comes from the Lord and helps in the growth of crops.

Also, for growth of crops, one needs sunlight and rain. They, again, are manifestations of the Lord's energy. Here, the moon is said to be watery (or liquid). It is only a poetic description. The energy from the moon is also needed for the growth of plants and herbs.

Western medicine has come to accept the power of medicinal properties of the herbs. Āyurvedic medicine, which comes from India, strongly believes the effect of the moon on medicinal plants. Scientists are now working on the power of the moon in the growth of plants also. They are collecting proof of the beneficial value of moonlight.

The Lord uses the word '*ojasā dhārayāmi*'. It means He, as energy, supports all. We, of the modern generation cannot question the power of energy for sustenance of life in anything. We, the Hindus, have attributed this energy to *Paramātmā*. Without food, the beings cannot survive. Hence it is no exaggeration to say that the Lord supports and sustains all beings.

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।
प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥१४॥
ahaṁ vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇināṁ deham āśritaḥ |
prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ pacāmy annaṁ caturvidham ||14||

I abide in the body of beings, and having become the digestive power called Vaiśvānara, I digest the four-fold food, associated with the vital forces of prāṇa *and* apāna.

vaiśvānaraḥ: Digestive energy.
prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ: Associated with the vital forces of *prāṇa* and *apāna*.
pacāmi: Digest.

We have to understand the meaning of the words used in this verse.

Vaiśvānara: This is the digestive power in all living beings. From the thirteenth verse we understood that the food is produced by the energy of the Lord. What happens to the food we eat? It gets digested and gives us the blood and energy which are needed for survival and growth. This digestive power is popularly known in Sanskrit as *jaṭharāgni*. Vaiśvānara is *jaṭharāgni.* The energy in us acts like fire and digests the food.

Prāṇāpāna: *Prāṇa* is the life-force in us. In relation to the digestive process it is the power that causes motility of the upper part of the digestive system like the stomach and duodenum.

Apāna is the excretory side of the system. Energy is needed to excrete the by-products of digestion. (*Apāna* also includes the organ of reproduction). Anything that is excreted is due to the power of *apāna*.

The same energy that helps in digestion, also produces motility in the intestines and throws out the unnecessary by-products. The Lord through *prāṇāpāna* digests and eliminates the by-products.

Pacāmyannam caturvidham: I digest the four-fold food. In Hinduism, it is taught that all types of food one eats fall into the following four categories:

(1) The food which has to be eaten by mastication, i.e., *bhakṣyam*;

(2) the soft food which has to be sucked in, i.e., *bhojyam;*

(3) that which has to be licked, i.e., *lehyam;* and

(4) that which has to be swallowed, i.e., *coṣyam.*

Any type of food has to be eaten in any one of the above four methods.

Now, if we analyse the verse: The Lord abiding in the body as the *ātman,* becomes the digestive power to digest the food, motility-force to move the food down the gullet and the force to take away the by-products of digestion; for the four types of food eaten by all beings.

The procedure is to recite this *mantra* first before starting to eat. Then a spoonful of water is taken on the palm of the right hand, and reciting the 24th verse in chapter 4 (*brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma.......*), the water is sprinkled all around the plate. After this procedure only, one should eat the food. Food eaten in this spirit becomes a *yajña* as well. As it is a *yajña*, one must eat with the following conditions:

(1) Offer some food to the God, i.e., drop some food at the side of the plate. The food on the side of the plate and left overs are thrown out and they serve as food for birds and insects which are, after all, God's creation.

(2) Offer food to the needy. Beggars and people who come to the door asking for food, should be offered a plate of food. For some reason, they are not able to get food to eat. They are also Lord's creation and should be given food.

Some people ask, why should we give a fit man something to eat. We are encouraging laziness. In a sense it is true; but, really speaking, the person who is receiving it is commiting a crime if he obtains the food by improper means. He will pay for that sin later. We cannot act as judges ascertaining the fitness of the person to receive the food. We should try to give it to any person who comes to the door. In olden days, people used to come to the door at meal times and were given some food to eat. No seeker of food was ever sent away.

(3) The food should be *sāttvika*. It is described in detail in chapter 17 (verses 8 & 9).

(4) The food should be earned by righteous means.

The Lord is a witness to all our actions. Eating food is a main aspect of one's living and we must remember the Lord always, including at meal times.

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि संनिविष्टो मत्तः स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च ।
वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ॥१५॥

sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi saṁniviṣṭo
***mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṁ ca* |**
vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo
***vedāntakṛd vedavid eva cāham* ||15||**

And I am seated in the hearts of all beings. From Me are memory, knowledge and forgetfulness. I am verily that which is to be known by all the Vedas. *I am the author of* Vedānta *and verily I am the knower of the* Vedas.

sanniviṣṭo: Seated.
mattaḥ: From Me.
smṛti: Memory.
apohanam: Forgetfulness.
vedāntakṛd: The author of the *Veda*.
vedavit: Knower of *Veda*s.

The Lord says that He is in all beings (*sarvasya*). There is no distinction or partiality. Every being has the Lord inside him. When we know that the Lord is the greatest Soul and He Himself is inside all, why should we consider some people superior and some inferior? There should not be any differentiation due to caste, sex, etc.

Where does He abide inside us? Inside our hearts. It is not to be taken as 'the heart', a part of our body that pumps the blood to all our organs. It is the mind. Through our mind we express our character. Inside our mind there is a spark of divinity but it is clouded by our *vāsanā*s. If we clear away the *vāsanā*s, the spark shines through and is then expressed in our thoughts and actions.

Smṛtir jñānam apohanam: Behind all our thoughts and actions there is the light of conscience and without it, no thoughts and actions are possible. Life is full of thoughts and experiences. *Smṛti* or memory, is defined as "the store of past experiences and thoughts". Certain actions we did in the past gave us some experiences and make us understand better. For example, I burnt my hand after touching the fire. Two things have happened due to that. First of all, I realised that it hurts and being burnt is an experience. Secondly, this experience, stored in my memory, prevents me from touching the fire again. So, as far as putting my hand in the fire, I have developed knowledge. I know that it burns and it hurts. Memory and knowledge are the grace of the Lord.

Next word, i.e., forgetfulness also comes from the grace of the Lord. One should not misunderstand this word.

We have, as we have just discussed, gone through several stages and experiences in our life. We have gone through childhood, adulthood, middle age, old age, depending on how old we are. We have had thousands of experiences, both small and big in those stages. Can we remember them all? No. If we could remember them all, our mind would have no room left to remember any more experiences of the present.

The store room of our mind has to be cleared to make room for new thoughts and experiences. This process of clearing is called forgetfulness and it is the grace of God. Let us not try to kid ourselves when we develop forgetfulness that hinders our progress. A student cannot say that he cannot help his forgetfulness, which is hindering his studies. That forgetfulness is different. It is due to lack of self-application and determination to succeed, it is due to concentrating the mind on other things at the same time. He needs *abhyāsa* (practice) to remember. It has to be developed from childhood.

The Lord says He is verily that which is to be known by all the *Veda*s. All the *Veda*s are attempts to know the Reality behind all phenomena in the world. What is the past of the past! Where did life originate? Who is the originator? All this is discussed in the *Veda*s. In other words, *Veda*s try to know the truth behind life's existence and manifestations.

As we have discussed in several sections before, it is the "conscious principle" behind all manifestations. It is the "conscience" that reveals in all. It is all-pervading, and is the substratum behind all the multiple experiences and phenomena in the pluralistic world. It is the 'awareness' (absolute energy). This is True Knowledge.

This principle has also got the property of bliss. It is experience that brings contentment which is different from happiness. Knowing the 'truth' makes one not fall into the cycle of happiness and sorrows in life. The conscious principle is always in a state of bliss.

So, that which is to be known by the *Veda*s is *sat* (truth), *cit* (knowledge) and *ānanda* (bliss). *Vedānta*s are the end-result of knowing the *Veda*s. The Lord says He is the author of *Vedānta*. The Lord is the author of the *Upaniṣad, Bhagavadgītā*.

All the *ṛṣi*s who gave us the *Veda*s did not accept authorship of what they said. They said that at some inspirational moments, due to some higher power which was not theirs, some divine statements came from them. They were just the vehicles for such expressions and did not accept that "they said so". They all said that 'the Lord said so'.

The Lord says the same thing. He is the author of *Vedānta*. Because of this, the Lord is said to be the knower of the *Veda*s.

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च ।
क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥१६॥
dvāv imau puruṣau loke kṣaraś cākṣara eva ca |
kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate ||16||

Two puruṣas *are there in the world, the perishable and the imperishable. All the bodies of beings are perishable and the* jīva (kūṭastha) *is called imperishable.*

The Lord is trying to point out the nature of the Infinite. *Puruṣa* is person. *Kṣara puruṣa* is perishable person. We have already learnt about the gross body and the subtle body. The gross body which goes through various stages of life is *kṣara*. The child perishes to become a teenager and the teenager perishes to become an adult, etc. Sometime during this process, one also has physical death. This is *kṣara puruṣa*. He perishes from one stage to reach another stage and eventually dies. He is the gross body.

Different from this is the subtle body which includes the mind and intellect. This does not die. The Soul, having developed close links with the mind/intellect and identifying with it becomes *jīva* and it is the subtle body. During all the stages of development, the *jīva* retains its identity as the ego. It remains the same when the gross body undergoes changes. Also, after death it moves to find new matter to express itself as new life. This process goes on till the *jīva* clears away all the desires and finally merges with *Paramātmā*. Compared to the gross body, this is *akṣara* i.e., imperishable. As it is a constant factor in all changes, it is called as *kūṭastha*.

When I identify myself with the physical body I am the *kṣara* *puruṣa*. When I identify myself with my mind (*mano'bhimānī*) I become *akṣara puruṣa.* When 'I' merge into *Paramātmā*, it is known as *akṣara Puruṣottama* (*akṣara Parabrahman*).

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः ।
यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥१७॥

***uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyaḥ paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ* |**
***yo lokatrayam āviśya bibharty avyaya īśvaraḥ* ||17||**

He who is different from the two puruṣas, *is called the* Paramātmā, *who permeating the three worlds, sustains them is the Supreme* Puruṣa.

bibharti: Sustains.
udāhṛtaḥ: Is called.

We have discussed in the last verse the *kṣara puruṣa* and *akṣara puruṣa* who are two different manifestations of the *ātman* depending on the medium through which it is reflected. Living in the reflection of the body is *deha-dṛṣṭi* and living in the reflection of the mind is *jīva-dṛṣṭi.*

Behind these two is the real *puruṣa* who is not reflected via any channels. He is the Supreme *Puruṣa* and is also known as *Puruṣottama.* To reach this state is the ultimate aim of life. The person who has attained this state is called *jīvanmukta.*

The Lord says He is *anyaḥ.* He is different from both *kṣara* and *akṣara*. He is not the reflected sun or moon but the Real One. What then are the attributes of the Lord? He is *bibhartā* (sustainer) and *avyayaḥ* (Imperishable). He permeates the three worlds.

According to Hinduism the three worlds are: (1) *deva-loka,* (2) *bhū-loka,* (3) *pātāla-loka.*

Deva-loka is the abode of gods. Bhū-loka is the abode of men. Pātāla-loka is the abode of demons and reptiles.

Philosophically the *loka* or world is a state of experience. We experience the world from what impulses we receive from our sense-organs and how we analyse it by our mind/intellect. As the experiences of the majority of people in a geographical sense is similar, we have together created an universe. It is the combined experience and commonly accepted concept of the majority.

The three worlds of experience at individual levels are: (1) Wakeful, (2) Dream, (3) Deep sleep states. We all go through the three experiences everyday. The common factor presiding over all the three experiences is the 'conscience' inside each of us. This conscience is all-pervading. It pervades the wakeful, dream and sleep state of individuals. This is the supporter of the three states of experiences. The conscience principle is the energy that sustains life's experiences. If it was not there, the individual is said to be dead. So, the Lord says He is the *Īśvara* of the three worlds.

We can understand this if we use a comparison. Suppose we keep a bucket in a room inside a house. The house is built in the atmospheric space. As long as the house is there it appears as though it is a separate space. Actually without the atmospheric space, the house would not have existed. The atmospheric space permeates the house. As soon as the house is demolished, that separate entity of space ceases to exist. The space in the room inside the house and space inside the bucket similarly are limited because of the boundary of the containers. All the three are permeated by atmospheric space. When the bucket is removed and the walls of the room are demolished, only one space remains and that is atmospheric space.

Similarly, one principal Supreme conscience is manifested as different names and forms due to the physical body and mind (*upādhi*). Once the mind is totally free of *vāsanās*, it merges into the Self within and that state is liberation from bondage, i.e., *mukti*.

Paramātmā is the ruler and sustainer of the three worlds.

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥१८॥
yasmāt kṣaram atīto'ham akṣarād api cottamaḥ |
ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ ||18||

> *As I transcend the perishable and as I am higher even than the imperishable, for that reason, I am declared as* Puruṣottama *in the world and in the* Vedas.
>
> *prathitaḥ*: Declared.

Because of what has been said about the *kṣara* and *akṣara puruṣa* so far, the Lord is to be attained only by transcending the two states. One should live a higher, moral level of living than living in association with the physical body and the mind. Hence living in that highest level is possible to only one person, i.e., *Paramātmā*. He is the greatest among all *ātmā*s. This has been accepted in the present world. The *Veda*s have declared it thousands of years ago.

यो मामेवमसंमूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्भजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥१९॥

***yo mām evam asaṁmūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam* |**
***sa sarvavid bhajati māṁ sarva-bhāvena bhārata* ||19||**

> *O Bhārata, he, who free from delusion, knows Me thus as the Supreme* Puruṣa, *is the all-knowing. He worships Me with his whole being.*
>
> *asaṁmūḍhaḥ*: Free from delusion.

How does the person who has realised *Puruṣottama* act? What sort of a person one can call him? These questions are answered here.

We are generally termed as ignorant. This is because we live with the sense of ego. We have attachment to the outer world through our perceptions (physical), feelings (mental) and thoughts (intellectual). We are said to be deluded (*mūḍhaḥ*). We do not realise who we really are. In contrast, the person who knows "The Truth" is *asaṁmūḍhaḥ*, i.e., undeluded.

As the final aim of one's existence is to realise the ultimate truth of one's existence, the person who knows it is called 'all-knowing' (*sarvavid*). We get Ph.D., engineering, medical degrees and call ourselves knowers of that field (subject). The one who knows *Puruṣottama* will get the title *sarvavid* given to him by the scholars.

How does he act? He constantly and whole-heartedly worships the Lord. He does not live the life of Jekyll and Hyde, attached to the world one minute and another minute acting in a godly way. He is constantly Godly. The feeling comes deep from inside his heart (*sarvabhāvena*).

We all know it by experience. The more we love a person, the more we identify ourselves with that person. A true devotee is the one who has totally identified himself with the Lord. The greater the child loves her mother, the greater she identifies herself with her and she acts like her mother as she grows mature. The child loved her mother so much because she has understood the true loving, caring, selfless nature of the mother towards her child. This love can be acquired by constant practice which should start early in childhood.

> इति गुह्यतमं शास्त्रमिदमुक्तं मयाऽनघ ।
> एतद् बुद्ध्वा बुद्धिमान्स्यात्कृतकृत्यश्च भारत ॥२०॥
> **iti guhyatamaṁ śāstram idam uktaṁ mayānagha |**
> **etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaś ca bhārata ||20||**
>
> *Thus I have declared unto you the most secret of all* śāstras. *He who understands it well, becomes wise and will accomplish all his duties.*
>
> *anagha*: Sinless.
> *kṛta-kṛtyaḥ*: One who accomplished his duties.

What is the fruit of understanding? What is the duty of every man? The Lord answers it here.

What has been said by the Lord is the most secret of the *śāstras*. As we have discussed, it is said to be secret for a particular reason. It is a secret to be cherished. It can be cherished only by those who have a desire to know and love to know. Others, who do not believe and are strongly attached to the world, may misrepresent the facts to their own benefit. They do not only misrepresent but also spread false stories about the same. They will sway the minds of neutrals who have no particular idea of their own.

After all, the purpose of being born as human beings is to make use of one's intellect. One should make the universe a better place to live in. One should see the Self in all and spread the message of 'oneness' in his actions. If he has done so, he has no other duties to perform. One can acquire *puṇya* by performing dedicated duty in his field of work but he should also understand the true nature of himself. On understanding that true nature, he is said to be a *brahma-jñānī*.

This *brahma-vidyā* is usually taught to those who have developed self-control by purity (*citta-śuddhi*). Arjuna, by his sinless acts got the qualification to receive the secret of *brahma-jñāna*. That is why even after 5000 years it has survived the onslaught of invaders like the Muslims, Christians, Arabs, etc.

We all feel happy when we have accomplished a task which we took on. It is like *kṛta-kṛtya* in relation to the task undertaken. A student having studied well and passed exams with distinction is said to have become a *kṛta-kṛtya*. Best fulfilment will come from the understanding of the true nature of the Lord and such a person is said to be 'wise' (*jñānī*). He gets a total and overwhelming joy in himself. He has achieved what he was born for.

This knowledge is said to come from some great teacher (*guru*) or by some incidental factor in one's life. The Lord says, *dadāmi buddhi-yogam* (I give them the *yoga* of knowledge).

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे पुरुषोत्तमयोगो नाम पञ्चदशोऽध्यायः ॥

iti śrīmad-bhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogaśāstre śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde puruṣottama-
yogo nāma pañcadaśo'dhyāyaḥ ॥

CHAPTER 16

DAIVĀSURA-SAMPAD-VIBHĀGA-YOGA

Daiva means divine and *āsura* means undivine. This chapter deals with the division of virtues in any person as divine and undivine. *Sampad* means treasure. We can carry a treasure of divine virtues or undivine virtues. This chapter explains how one can attain union with the Lord by possessing divine virtues. Hence it is called *daivāsura-sampad-vibhāga-yoga.*

What is treasure? It is what we possess abundantly. We can be very rich in wealth. We may have a lot of money or material possessions. What do we get out of it? We are called rich by people who have less of that wealth than what we possess. We can buy expensive things and spend on luxuries. Also, to look after it, we spend restless nights trying to safeguard what we have and plan to make more of the same. At the end of it all, we find we have had no time for spiritual knowledge.

We can be rich in our scientific knowledge. This will bring us a good position in that field. We can make use of our knowledge to educate others or towards welfare of humanity. This treasure of knowledge is superior to the treasure of wealth.

We also possess qualities. We have discussed in *guṇatraya-vibhāga-yoga* about different *guṇa*s we possess and how we tend to have an abundance of a particular *guṇa*. *Guṇa*s depend on our past *vāsanā*s (desires). We cannot lose our *guṇa*s. Nobody can steal our *guṇa*s. We can drop certain *guṇa*s and develop certain other *guṇa*s.

We can develop more divine qualities in us. These virtues will act as our treasure. The more we get this treasure, the better we will be in our spiritual progress. We will not find our spiritual journey hard at all. With those virtues we have not got the fear of being robbed by wayside robbers. We can attain *mokṣa* easily. Against which, if we possess more of undivine qualities, that treasure will not help us in the path to spiritual realisation. That treasure will lead us away from God.

We do not have to steal virtues from anybody. We do not have to physically exhaust ourselves to possess these treasures. They come to us because of our desires. If we desire to achieve *mokṣa*, then we have to analyse our treasure. Will the treasure that we have, take us to Him? Should I then drop some bad treasures and get good treasures? We simply have to try to change our nature. It is no use saying 'it is my nature, I cannot help it'. If we say so, then nobody can help us.

We have *buddhi* (intellect) and we can change our nature using it. This chapter should be read and if we understand it properly, we should use that knowledge to check on our nature. We should look at our treasure of virtues. We should change our nature with the help of scriptures, the teaching by *guru*s and by constant practice of good virtues. We should wash off undivine qualities from our mind and body.

This chapter is a continuation of the 9th chapter in which the nature of gods and *asura*s was discussed. The Lord has also referred to people of evil nature in chapter 7 (*vijñāna-yoga*).

श्रीभगवानुवाच
अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥१॥

śrī bhagavān uvāca
abhayaṁ sattvasaṁśuddhir jñānayoga-vyavasthitiḥ |
dānaṁ damaś ca yajñaś ca svādhyāyas tapa ārjavam ||1||

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुनम् ।
दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥२॥
ahiṁsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaiśunam |
dayā bhūteṣv aloluptvaṁ mārdavaṁ hrīr acāpalam ||2||

तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता ।
भवन्ति संपदं दैवीमभिजातस्य भारत ॥३॥

tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucam adroho nātimānitā |
bhavanti sampadaṁ daivīm abhijātasya bhārata ||3||

The Lord said

Fearlessness, purity of mind, steadfastedness in the yoga *of knowledge, alms-giving, control of senses, sacrifice, study of the* śāstras, *austerity and straightforwardness;*

harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion to beings, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickle-mindedness;

energy, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride, these belong to one born of a divine nature.

The Lord starts this discourse with a description of divine qualities. He has enumerated 26 qualities of a truly divine-natured person. In chapter 13 (*kṣetra-kṣetrajña-yoga*) the Lord has given 20 qualities of a *jñānī*. Ever so often, the Lord keeps on reminding us of good qualities so that we can analyse our thoughts and actions.

The Lord wants us to practise the development of good virtues. *Sādhanā* is nothing but constant practice to purify our mind. The *sādhaka* should put up 26 cards enumerating the 26 virtues in his room and look at them often and question his actions of the past and plan his actions for the future. Just like one who safeguards his money and valuables, the *sādhaka* must check his treasure everyday and see that he has not lost any. True richness comes from possessing divine qualities.

(1) **Abhayam:** Fearlessness is the first virtue. We are frightened when we are not sure of something. We are frightened to go into a dark room. We are frightened to walk on an unknown path. This is all because of ignorance. Once we get to know things properly, we are not frightened.

We see in exam halls students looking up and down with frightened looks. A few are not bothered. They have no fear of what they have learnt and practised. If the teacher says that the students will have a test now, not many are prepared to take it.

Knowledge takes away fear. The knowledge of the divine path will help us to walk boldly on it.

Our attachment to life and its possessions is due to ignorance. We are frightened to lose our companions in our life's journey. The constant companion in our life is our own *ātman*. He will never leave us. If we know He is with us always, why fear? We start developing undivine qualities because of fear. We lie, cheat, betray others, fight out of fear of losing something which we treasure. These make us weak if we decide to walk on the path to *mokṣa*. The vitamin needed to make us strong is *abhaya*. Once you know the truth, and follow truth, there is no more room for fear.

(2) **Sattvasaṁśuddhi:** Purity of mind is the second virtue. If we are pure in our minds, why should we be frightened? A clean mirror gives a pure reflection. We should use our intellect as our mirror to see our thoughts. Have we got honest intentions and pure motives in our thoughts? Are our actions going to be honest and pure? We should wipe off anything that hinders us from being honest and pure.

(3) **Jñāna-yoga-vyavasthitiḥ:** Steadfastness in the *yoga* of knowledge. By studying and listening to the teacher daily, the student achieves knowledge. He will then practise that knowledge to become a scholar in that subject. If the student's mind is diverted, the knowledge becomes imperfect. All efforts to achieve the *yoga* of knowledge must be steadfast. There is no room for laxity. The Lord has said before: '*sarvaṁ karmākhilaṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*'.

If one wants to cross over the ignorance of attachment to *saṁsāra*, he should develop *jñāna* or knowledge by constant practice. If we want something badly, we should be prepared to let go of what we have got already. If we want to take away something from a child, we tend to offer something nice to the child. The Lord is offering us knowledge to achieve *mokṣa* and asking us to drop our attachment to *saṁsāra*.

(4) **Dāṇam:** This is charity. It becomes a charity only when one can give what he has out of goodwill and does not expect anything in return. One can donate time, money, knowledge, food, water, etc. Charity also has to be what one has achieved or acquired righteously. Charity comes from abundance. We all have an abundance of love in us. We can therefore give our love to fellow beings without fear of losing it. The greatest charity one can give is kindness and love. Mother Teressa is a great example of one who kept giving *dānam* of love and compassion throughout her life.

(5) **Damaḥ:** Control of external sense-organs. Our sense-organs pull us away from our path to progress. They take away our energy which is needed to control the mind. *Sattva-saṁśuddhi* is controlling the mind. *Dama* is controlling the sense-organs. We should not only develop a habit of not seeing bad things but we should also take care that they do not register as a desire in our mind. 'See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil' is *damaḥ*.

(6) **Yajña:** (Sacrifice). There are various forms of *yajña*s, i.e., *dravya-yajña, tapo-yajña, svādhyāya-yajña,* etc. (This is discussed in chapter 4, verse 28).

(7) **Svādhyāya:** It can be interpreted in two ways. One is: regular study of the scriptures and practising the truths enshrined in them. This is the way to scriptural progress. One can read, understand and follow the *Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, Bible,* etc. The other meaning is: self-study. We must study ourselves, see what is wrong in us and try to correct it. We must cure our mental illness of impure thoughts. No doctor can see through our thoughts. We have access to our minds through ourselves only.

(8) **Tapaḥ:** It is an act of self-denial at body and mind levels. We can deny ourselves of impure, sinful thoughts and actions. It is discussed in detail in the next chapter. It does not mean torture of the body. It is only an act to reduce attachment to the world of plurality. This helps us in saving energy which is needed for meditation on the 'Self'.

(9) **Ārjavam:** Straight-forwardness. We should be straight-forward at all the three levels of perception. Our actions, words

and thoughts must not have any tinge of impurity. They should all be pure and well coordinated. It is called *trikaraṇaśuddhi* (thinking, speaking and action are the pathway to any actions). They form a chain. 'Truth' should be the basis of all the three. Praising somebody outwardly and cursing the same person inwardly is not good. Giving charity grudgingly is not *ārjavam*. Giving something with a desire for personal benefit in return cannot be called charity.

All these virtues are preparatory for our journey to achieve *yoga*. We can buy the ticket for our journey by developing all the virtues and keep the ticket always for inspection by the ticket examiner on the journey.

(10) **Ahiṁsā:** (Non-injury). Injury can be inflicted in various ways. It could be verbal or physical. One can be injuring a person by verbal abuse. It is not just non-injury to other fellow humans but it also includes non-injury to all living creatures. If our motives are pure, we will not harm anybody by word or deed.

We cannot avoid physical injury totally in our day-to-day living. There are many insects we kill while walking on the road. We will be treading on a number of small insects. As part of medicinal treatment, we kill many germs. The surgeon inflicts physical injury during operations. But, they are all unavoidable injuries.

(11) **Satyam:** Truth is an essential quality. One should be truthful in thought, word and deed. The witness to one's actions should be one's own Self. It is called *ātma-sākṣī*. In certain situations truth can bring some suffering and in those situations withholding the truth is necessary. For example, sometimes a physician may find it hard to tell the truth to his patient about his illness. If telling the truth is likely to make the patient worse mentally, one can withhold the truth.

(12) **Akrodhaḥ:** Absence of anger. This has been discussed in chapter 2, verse 63 (*krodhād bhavati saṁmohaḥ*). Anger leads to destruction of the person at the end. It is unavoidable to come across situations which make one angry. What is needed is to control it. Anger should not rule over us. Anger is due to lack

of patience. By developing patience, one can control anger. One should always try to keep a true balance of temper. One way of dealing with it is not to show an immediate reaction. If somebody is shouting at you or insulting you and making you angry, the solution is to withdraw from that scene if possible. Later on you can go and meet the person who caused or started the quarrel (in a cool and composed manner).

We usually tend to burst out in angry situations. The mind gets agitated so rapidly that its capacity to think and act is lost temporarily. The blood pressure goes up. It might, in certain situations, also end up in heart attack or a stroke. Why let oneself suffer? Why not develop the cool temperament. Laughter, sometimes helps to check it.

(13) **Tyāga:** It is renunciation or a form of sacrifice. We normally are attached to objects of the world. What we need is to renounce these attachments. This cannot be an overnight decision and running away from one's responsibilities to society.

In India, when people go to sacred centres of pilgrimage like Kāśī, they usually renounce something. Generally they say they will not eat aubergines (or some food stuff) anymore. They then stick to that for the rest of their lives. It is in a way good, because one can develop discipline.

What is more important is to renounce evil thoughts and actions. Renouncing the desire to enjoy is real *tyāga*.

For example, we see and hear a number of things in day-to-day life which bring us desires. We then want to acquire it. Some people will have a great desire for different types of jewellery. One could renounce wearing gold on the body and declare that it is *tyāga*. Just by not wearing jewellery or expensive clothes, one cannot be called a true *tyāgī*. The person's mind has to be pure. There should not be any desire for worldly objects. It requires long practice to achieve any success.

The best type of *tyāga* is *karma-phala-tyāga*. Dropping or renouncing the desires for the fruit of action will bring peace to the person. He has no more agitations in his mind. His mind will be calm like the surface of a quiet lake.

(14) **Śāntiḥ:** Peace is a continuation of the result of *tyāga*. If all desires (*vāsanā*s) are burnt, and no new *vāsanā*s come in, one can easily concentrate on his *ātmā*. This brings total peace of mind. By living the life of truth, by practising *ahiṁsā*, by controlling anger, by *tyāga,* one can attain peace.

All these virtues are described in a proper sequence by the Lord. If we analyse each virtue described here, it will help us in developing the next virtue. If we believe that the Lord is the sole protector and we take refuge in Him, we get peace. There are a number of illnesses for which modern medicine has no cure. What should a person do? Sit and cry over his fate? No. Our religion asks us to take shelter in the Lord. By telling us that what we suffer is due to our past actions, we are given a solution to face hard situations in life. Instead of blaming and getting angry with Lord, we should be saying : ''O God, thank you. You are ever merciful. You have decided to wipe off my past sins. I can now go on my journey to reach You. As long as I have a taint of sin, I know, I cannot reach You. So, help me, God, give me courage to face any situation''. This brings perfect peace.

(15) **Apaiśunam:** This means not pointing at bad qualities in others. It involves controlling one's tongue. We can do a lot of damage with our talk. 'Telling tales' is a bad habit. Our duty is to make ourselves pure. Let us clean ourselves first.

Speech is considered as a test of one's character and temperament. Gentle, peace-bringing speech is so wonderful to listen to. Listening to scandals, etc. is not beautiful. By developing internal discipline, one can train oneself to speak with love, sincerity and honesty. To listen to the *Gītā* sung by Lord Kṛṣṇa is so beautiful. We can go on listening to it.

Why point our fingers at bad qualities of others? See if you have that bad quality in you. If so, drop that bad quality. This is the only way to progress.

(16) **Dayā bhūteṣu:** It means compassion to all and especially to those in suffering. Compassion to those not in suffering might bring some doubt on actually what it means. It means therefore compassion for and understanding of others who may have not

reached spiritual perfection and who are ignorant of the spiritual way of living. In a way they are suffering but they are not aware of it.

There are three kinds of people one encounters, good, bad and indifferent. We all encounter these qualities at different times in different proportions. A man of divine quality understands such people and is not harsh with them. One cannot expect everybody to be totally perfect and understand the scriptures. By being compassionate, one should be able to forgive a sinner also. Tolerate others because not everybody is perfect, is the Lord's teaching. It does not mean that one should not be punished for mistakes. The judicial system is meant to punish crimes but it also is expected to be compassionate. Wherever possible the criminal has to be treated with compassion so that after the punishment, he becomes a better person. He should not come out of punishment with more hatred towards fellow beings.

Compassion to those in suffering is very essential. People suffer for various reasons. It could be poverty, ill-health, unemployment, etc. Giving money to those who are in suffering is good only to a small extent. What is given should come out of the kindness of heart. We cannot cure the sufferings of all the millions of people in the world. But, as a group, we can help quite a good number. Charitable organisations like the Red Cross, Oxfam, etc. are meant to look at these problems.

At individual level one can try and help one or two people regularly who are in need of help. There are people who pull rickshaws and earn money. One should not begrudge giving them reasonable money for their efforts. Similarly, we should be compassionate to animals also. Cruelty to animals cannot be a divine quality.

(17) **Alolatvam:** *Lolatvam* is indulgence in sense-pleasures. There should not be extreme indulgence in any form of sense-pleasures. It causes bodily harm in course of time.

When our mind is drawn to these pleasures, it behaves like a wild horse. It will be difficult to control it. The wild horse will drop the rider and the rider gets seriously injured. He cannot make any progress in his journey. That is why, *brahmacarya* is advocated. *Brahmacarya* is constant thoughts on *Brahman* and not on sense-pleasures of any sort.

(18) **Mārdavam:** This is gentleness in word and deed. This is a virtue in relation to contact with others in the world. We should not be harsh. If our child commits a mistake, we are expected to be gentle to the child. We explain in child's language and make the child realise her mistake. The person must know that there is kindness in the other person's words.

(19) **Hrīḥ:** This means modesty. A modest person does not show off. Also, if he does something wrong he is ashamed of it and admits his mistake. For example, if I tell a lie, I should be ashamed of it and admit it.

If I am expected to make my journey towards *mokṣa* a success, I must be modest to know what my faults are and must modestly ask the *guru* to help me.

Arjuna's main virtue was modesty. As a modest person, he sought Kṛṣṇa's help whenever he failed to understand and explained his own weaknesses to Him in any situation.

(20) **Acāpalam:** *Cāpalam* is fickleness. The mind is constantly wandering. Even after shutting the sense-organs, the mind is still dwelling in its own world. Putting the reins on the wandering horses is essential. We should put reins on our wandering thoughts. This also includes avoiding unnecessary movements of the limbs. Meditation is a process of staying still for a particular length of time and concentrating on the *ātmā*.

(21) **Tejaḥ:** The light of knowledge must shine forth in a divine personality. This is reflected in the constant state of bliss one enjoys and is expressed through gentle smiles, gentle talk, gentle walk, which brings in a sense of peace.

(22) **Kṣamā:** Forgiveness is an important virtue. One should be able to forgive the worst sinner. The only condition is that the sinner should realise his sin and sincerely come to the person for forgiveness and help. He is willing to forgive anybody. He does not dwell on the bad things done to him by others.

(23) **Dhṛti:** This is fortitude. One should be firm in his thoughts and actions.

The path to *mokṣa* is not a straight road. It is filled with a number of sharp corners and does not have a bell to warn that one has reached the last corner. In other words, life's journey is riddled with pains and sorrow. One is expected to face all types of situations in one's life. One can enjoy sweet things only when one knows what is bitter. When one takes bitter medicine, one gets better. One should not think that the medicine is bitter and decide to face the illness without taking the medicine. One should not get dejected half-way in his task. He should have thought thoroughly before taking up the task. He may have come to the end of his task and drop it without realising he has come to the end.

Determination in achieving success (*mokṣa*) needs firm belief in God. It needs consistency of purpose and keeping a clear picture before oneself of one's goal. He should be prepared to sacrifice a good deal to attain success.

(24) **Śaucam:** This is purity. One should be pure externally and internally. An impure mind is the worse of the two. We should not have impure thoughts in our mind, we should not have bad feelings in our minds.

We must help our children develop the habit of being clean and tidy all the time and keep themselves pure always. We should be ashamed of letting others see the mess in our house. We should be ashamed of letting the Lord (witness) see the impurity of our mind.

(25) **Adroha:** This means absence of desire to injure others. We should not betray others. To injure others is like injuring oneself. We should never develop a revengeful attitude towards others. The one who betrays is called *drohī*. If what you have done is according to your conscience, why bother if somebody betrays you? You carry on your task and do not get side-tracked.

Betrayal is seen more often in politics. People tend to betray one party and go over to the other side. Instead of trying to hate the person who betrayed, and instead of saying, "I will see to his downfall at any cost, I do not care what happens to me or my people in the process", one should analyse the betrayer.

"What was wrong with what I was doing? Why did he betray me? Can I make any corrections in my ways", should be the attitude. By this, those who have betrayed us may even come back again.

By developing universal love and a feeling of oneness in all, we do not develop hatred to others. Hatred in turn leads us to hurt others.

(26) **Nātimānitā:** Absence of over-pride. We should not have a longing for self-honour. We should not expect others to honour and respect us. Respect automatically comes from pure actions. To have a gang of 'yes men' around a person makes that person forget one's own real capacity. One thinks he is great and starts living in a false world of security.

We should, as discussed in the introduction, look at all cards in our room which remind us of the twenty-six virtues. We should not feel proud that we have twenty-five out of twenty-six virtues. We should know what virtue we do not have. That is important.

If we think we have all the twenty-six virtues, and begin to feel great, it is not good. We should try to protect our virtues and be humble always.

दम्भो दर्पोऽभिमानश्च क्रोधः पारुष्यमेव च ।
अज्ञानं चाभिजातस्य पार्थ संपदमासुरीम् ॥४॥

dambho darpo'bhimānaś ca krodhaḥ pāruṣyam eva ca |
ajñānaṁ cābhijātasya pārtha saṁpadam āsurīm ||4||

O Arjuna, hypocrisy, arrogance, self-conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance belong to those who are born with demoniacal person.

As against the twenty-six virtues of divine treasure, the Lord, in one beautiful verse, has brought out six qualities of demoniacal nature.

Really speaking, they cannot be considered a treasure. But, the person who has such qualities is so proud of himself that he does not realise them as bad qualities at all. He has no time to dwell upon his character. He is completely engrossed in his own world and never has a moment to analyse and recognise his bad qualities.

Spiritually speaking, what are we fighting for and what are we fighting against in this life? The moment we realise that we are in spiritual war with ourselves and know that we all have divinity inside us and inside everybody, we are on the right path to progress.

The divinity inside us is, as it were, hiding in a dark room. If we want to bring it out, we must fight *māyā* (ignorance). For this fight, we must know the strength of the two opposing forces in us. The divine forces in us are twenty-six. How many are with us? Can we manage to have all the twenty-six virtues on our side? The force of the demoniacal force are six major qualities. How many are in us? Can we kill them off one at a time? If we kill them all, the ground is free for the growth of divine qualities. Any war needs a strategy. We must, with determination, plan a strategy and let our divinity be the winner.

Our body is a temple, the Lord is inside us. We cannot have the body (including mind) covered in impurity. Our demoniacal qualities are impurities. We must wipe them off. They are like dust and cobwebs in an unclean house. After wiping it clean, we must light the joss-sticks of divine qualities. The atmosphere becomes pure with pleasant scent. Then we must light the lamp of knowledge and make the place bright.

(1) **Dambhaḥ:** Pretension to appear greater than what one really is, is taken as the leader of the *āsurī* qualities. Our first fault is overestimating and giving over-importance to ourselves. If somebody honours us, we should be humble in honour. 'It is God's grace that I got honoured and not my personal effort', should be the attitude. *'Kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu'* is all one needs to do if he is honoured or gets a higher position in life.

After all, whom are we cheating by pretence? We are cheating ourselves. The Lord is our witness. He knows our real worth. We have nothing at all, it is all His.

Also we should not pretend to be righteous. What we show to the world by our words and deed should match with our thoughts. Thinking unrighteously while talking righteously is hypocrisy. Our intentions must and should remain pure.

(2) **Darpa** (Pride) **:** Pride is self-importance. We may be scholars, we may be wealthy or we may have a high position in life due to our own position in society or due to the high position of the family. But that should not make us behave arrogantly. Whatever we have is after all nothing compared to the Lord's. The whole universe is His and what we have is a very very tiny fraction. Our knowledge can be in relation to any one subject but that does not make us totally knowledgeable in all subjects. What we have is limited knowledge. Also, we have got it by God's grace. Due to some good we have done in the past, we are in a better position. We must share what we have and be humble always. Arrogance makes us live in an imaginary world. We think we are getting respect from others. The day we lose what we have, our gang of 'yes-men' will desert us. The 'yes-men' actually are those who love the other person's position and try to make the best for themselves from it. They have really no love for the actual person. An arrogant person is said to be the loneliest person.

(3) **Abhimāna:** In continuation of *darpa,* the arrogant person becomes self-conceited. This quality is *abhimāna*—he gives himself such an air of self-importance that he looks down upon all others. He cannot show true love and compassion to others. If one gets a position of high status, one should first of all respect the status. Becoming a leader of a party should bring more humbleness in the person. He should listen to others and bring respect to his position and not to himself.

(4) **Krodha:** This is the culmination of the effect of the above three qualities. Because of the other three qualities, he does not like anything that goes against his personal wish and desire. He starts losing temper if things start going wrong or if people do not do what he expects them to do.

(5) **Pāruṣya** (Harshness)**:** Out of anger, such a person is harsh to others. Whatever kindness and compassion he had, are gone. He hurts others and does not feel bad for hurting. Gentleness in word and deed are foreign nature to him.

(6) **Ajñāna:** Because of these, he becomes an ignorant person. This is *ajñāna*. Ignorance makes him develop these qualities. These qualities also make him more ignorant. It is a vicious circle. One becomes totally ignorant of one's true nature and also ignorant of analysing the relationship with others. Such an egocentric person will engineer his own downfall. Such people are called *āsuric* or diabolically fallen (because it is as good as having fallen down).

> दैवी संपद्विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता ।
> मा शुचः संपदं दैवीमभिजातोऽसि पाण्डव ।।५।।
> ***daivī saṁpad vimokṣāya nibandhāyāsurī matā |***
> ***mā śucaḥ saṁpadaṁ daivīm abhijāto'si pāṇḍava ||5||***
>
> *The divine treasure is for liberation, the demoniacal nature is for bondage. Grieve not, O Pāṇḍava, you are born for the divine treasure.*
>
> *abhijātaḥ*: Are born.

What are the results of attaining the qualities? Divine qualities will lead one to liberation, that is, liberation from bondage to *saṁsāra*. *Āsuric* qualities lead one to bondage. One should note clearly that no such word as ''hell'' is mentioned by the Lord. There is no punishment given by the Lord. Each person suffers on account of his own faults. We all have the light of divinity in each of us. Unfortunately, our divinity is obscured by our ignorance. If we remove ignorance, the veil of *māyā* is lifted and the light of divinity shines forth. We have let ignorance fall on the light, and like dust it darkens it. The ignorant person gets attached to the worldly objects and gets caught in the trap of *saṁsāra*.

It is therefore up to us to let our children develop some divine virtues and check their *āsuric* qualities. Both qualities can develop in us. It is up to us to get the qualities we want. As we grow up, we must get more and more divine qualities and become rich in good qualities and poor in *āsuric* qualities.

The Lord tells Arjuna :

Mā śucaḥ: ''Do not grieve''. This is ''The Message'' of the *Gītā* to mankind. We need not become desperate in self-pity. On reading or listening to these virtues, automatically our mind reflects on the bad qualities. ''O, my goodness, have I got so many bad qualities? How can I attain liberation?'' one will ask himself.

The fact that one has read up to the 16th chapter itself shows that one has a desire to know God. Such a person should not grieve. They will know God eventually.

Let us all try to collect the cards of twenty-six virtues (green cards) and drop the six bad qualities (red cards). In sport, the red card does not mean ban for life for the athlete. It is a temporary ban on the athlete or sportsman and he can come back to play the game again (once he acquires the standard).

द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन् दैव आसुर एव च ।
दैवो विस्तरशः प्रोक्त आसुरं पार्थ मे शृणु ॥६॥
dvau bhūtasargau loke'smin daiva āsura eva ca I
daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuraṁ pārtha me śṛṇu II6II

There are two kinds of beings created in the world, the divine and the demoniacal. Of these, the divine has been described at length; hear from Me, O Arjuna, of the demoniacal.

bhūtasargau: Creation of beings.
vistaraśaḥ: Extensively.

According to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the entire creation of beings can be classified under divine and demoniacal categories. There is no mention of any religion, sex or caste of a person. It is only the qualities that make one divine or demoniacal.

In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also, it is said that there are two classes of Prajāpati's creatures namely, *deva*s and *asura*s.

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च जना न विदुरासुराः ।
न शौचं नापि चाचारो न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते ॥७॥

pravṛttim ca nivṛttiṁ ca janā na vidur āsurāḥ I
na śaucaṁ nāpi cācāro na satyaṁ teṣu vidyate II7II

The demoniacal people do not know what to do and what to refrain from. They do not have purity, good conduct or truth.

pravṛtti: Righteous action.
nivṛtti: inaction.

In chapter 4, verse 17, the Lord has described *karma, vikarma* and *akarma*. These have been described in the *śāstra*s.

Divine persons, either through reading of the scriptures or through teaching, know what *śāstra*s say about right action (*śāstra*s have given in detail what types of work one has to do) and wrong action (what types of work one should not do). Right action is *karma* and wrong action is *vikarma*. *Akarma* is inaction. Here *pravṛtti* means *karma* and *nivṛtti* means *vikarma*.

Demoniacal persons have not read the *śāstra*s and have not been to any teachers. They therefore do not know what types of work are to be done and what types of work ought not to be done. Selfless work, working without looking for profits of the work, religious acts, etc. come under 'right actions'.

Na śaucam: In verse 3 of this chapter, we have learnt about *śaucam*. Cleanliness is both external and internal. Demoniacal people do not possess this quality. Their actions reflect their impurity. Their thoughts are impure. They do not know they are impure because they do not know what is pure.

Na ācaraḥ: *Ācāra* can be taken to mean right conduct. It is outward behaviour. We all have to maintain a set standard of behaviour in our society. As the minds of demoniacal persons are not pure, their standard of behaviour is also bad. They get zero out of 10 for their conduct.

In a classroom, the children are supposed to be disciplined. If all children are disciplined, the class will run smoothly. If a few (or even one child) do not follow discipline and behave as they want, the class does not progress smoothly. Most of the children (apart from extremely bright ones) suffer as a consequence. Similarly, the demoniacal persons who have no sense of right conduct disrupt the society and hinder its progress.

Na satyam: Demoniacal persons do not know what truth is and do not exhibit truthfulness in their actions. They are dishonest, they twist facts to their personal benefit. According to them what is of benefit to them personally is the truth.

One can also interpret it in a different way. They do not know what 'truth' is. Truth is that the *ātman* is real and that the body is false. For demoniacal people there is only one truth, i.e., the body. They do not know the existence of the *ātman*. This leads to their destruction but they are not aware of it. The view of the materialists in this world is to sideline *ātman* or God and rely solely on matter.

असत्यमप्रतिष्ठं ते जगदाहुरनीश्वरम् ।
अपरस्परसंभूतं किमन्यत्कामहैतुकम् ॥८॥
asatyam apratiṣṭhaṁ te jagad āhur anīśvaram |
aparasparasaṁbhūtaṁ kim anyat kāmahaitukam ||8||

They say that the world is without truth, without basis, and without a God. They believe that the world is caused by sexual desire being born of sexual acts of men and women and nothing else.

apratiṣṭham: Without moral basis (*dharma* and *adharma*).
kāmahaitukam: Caused by sexual desires.
aparasparasambhūtam: Born of sexual acts of men and women.
āhuḥ: Say.

The demoniacal people say that the *jagat* is *satyam*, i.e., without truth. They believe only what they see or hear or smell or touch. Their belief is centered on those impulses that are received from their sense-organs. They do not use their intellectual discrimination.

When we go to a cinema, we can see constant changes on the screen from advertisements, to previews, to the actual film. We do not see the constant factor behind the screen. Without the screen, there would not have been any film at all.

The *Veda*s say that the universe has a conscious principle which acts as the substratum for all changes that take place. They call that as "The Truth". The demoniacal people do not believe in the *Veda*s or the Truth.

Apratiṣṭham: They also do not accept any moral basis for their actions. According to them there is no such thing as righteous or unrighteous conduct. They believe in only one conduct, i.e., their conduct. They judge others by their conduct, and not according to the *śāstra*s.

Anīśvaram: They do not believe in the Lord. They do not believe in the architect of the happenings in the world. They say, "I plant the seeds and I get the crops, I eat it and I enjoy". They do not believe in the power of the Lord in the land, the sun and the rain that is needed for the growth of crops. They do not think anything other than the present. They consider themselves to be the lords of any happening or situation.

Because of such blatant ignorance of the truth, they consider that the entire creation is only the result of sexual acts only and nothing else.

एतां दृष्टिमवष्टभ्य नष्टात्मानोऽल्पबुद्धयः ।
प्रभवन्त्युग्रकर्माणः क्षयाय जगतोऽहिताः ॥९॥
etāṁ dṛṣṭim avaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmāno'lpabuddhayaḥ |
prabhavanty ugrakarmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato'hitāḥ ||9||

Holding this view, these ruined souls of small intellect and fierce deeds, come forth as the enemies of the world, for its destruction.

avaṣṭabhya: Holding.
ugrakarmāṇah: Of fierce actions.
ahitāḥ: Not wishing welfare.
kṣayāya: For the destruction.
prabhavanti: Are born.

Because of the view held by them, these people ruin themselves. They have no chance of attaining *mokṣa* by their present actions. Their actions are so fierce that it causes widespread destruction.

The Lord calls them *naṣṭātmānaḥ*. It means ruined souls. They do not recognise the Soul inside them. They believe only in the physical body. Evidently, the Souls in them have no chance to join *Paramātmā*. They end up in the constant whirlpool of births and deaths and their Souls are as good as ruined.

Because of their egotistic nature, they become *alpabuddhayaḥ*, i.e., men of little intellect. They have no eye-of-knowledge and cannot see anything beyond the grasp of their sense-organs. The Lord says that they are of fierce deeds. Because they lack any proper conduct (*ācāra*), their actions usually end in destruction, not only for them but also for others.

As we said before, the world has a number of indifferent people apart from a few good and a few bad people. They tend to sway to the side where the wind is blowing hard. If there is a force of bad conduct near them, they also develop such habits in the course of time (like an infectious disease).

In this world, there are both spiritualistic and materialistic people. Probably, one can say, it does not matter if such people do not believe in God. They, themselves, may have the physical and mental balance to keep cool in times of stress. But, by their influence they will convert a few others to become non-believers. Those people may be weak and not able to withstand pressures of life. Religion is meant to give support to people in times of stress.

Unfortunately, we are going through such an era now. The non-believers in God are increasing in number. They are indirectly causing the destruction of the world. They are not helping in the construction of a new world. Our future generation has unfortunately not getting a good foundation.

Even a non-believer has to believe in something. That something is 'his own power'. He becomes egotistic. That will become the example to follow for his children.

कामममाश्रित्य दुष्पूरं दम्भमानमदान्विताः ।
मोहाद् गृहीत्वासद्ग्राहान्प्रवर्तन्तेऽशुचिव्रताः ॥१०॥
kāmam āśritya duṣpūraṁ dambhamānamadānvitāḥ |
mohād gṛhītvā'sadgrāhān pravartante'śucivratāḥ ||10||

> *Filled with insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance, holding on to evil ideas by delusion, they work with impure resolves.*
>
> *duṣpūram*: Impossible to satisfy.
> *dambha-māna-madānvitāḥ*: Full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance.
> *asadgrāhān*: Evil ideas.

As we have discussed so far, a demoniacal person is a materialist. He believes in himself and becomes egotistical. An egotistical person will be full of desires. He wants to get this and that. His desires become insatiable and hence it is called *duṣpūram*. Desires breed more desires. *Yoga* is desire to get something, to unite with something. *Kṣema* means to protect what one gets. Really speaking, *yogakṣema* is to protect one's Soul. There is only one Soul.

On the other hand, the material world has innumerable objects. We get one, we protect one and get more to protect what we get. Lo and behold! We are caught in the trap of *saṁsāra*. In chapter 3, the Lord has compared this desire to fire.

Due to desires, our intelligence, ability and knowledge get side-tracked to fulfil the desires. We will not progress much in our lives. We cause a lot of disturbance to our beloved ones by our desires. The ego makes one feel superior. Once, one starts feeling superior, hypocrisy, pride and arrogance develop. They are the enemies in spiritual progress. This is *dambhamāna-madānvitatvam*.

Why does this happen? And what happens due to this? The answer is *mohāt*, i.e., by delusion like a vicious circle one leads to the other. We get deluded by our self-importance and develop pride, arrogance and hypocrisy. This is turn gets us more deluded. We forget our true divine nature. ''Ignorance is the root cause of evil'', our elders say.

The present situation in the world, where we have family break ups, social evils and political unrest are all due to increasing insatiable individual desires. It is due to forgetting the universal truth of oneness.

Aśucivratāḥ: *Vrata* means a resolve. When we resolve to do something, it is a *vrata*. If that resolve is a good one, it is *śucivrata*. For example, one takes up *mauna-vrata*, i.e., vow of silence. It avoids lot of evil and one conserves energy. Or we resolve to perform *Satya-Nārāyaṇa vrata*, i.e., to worship Lord Satyanārāyaṇa according to *śāstras*. These are all resolves to develop the *sāttvika* nature in us.

If we resolve to do selfish acts, it becomes *aśucivrata*. Our resolves should be pure and holy. Killing animals as an act of sacrifice and eating their flesh cannot be a *vrata*. Shameless, brutal, selfish acts to achieve something are not really a true *vrata*.

चिन्तामपरिमेयां च प्रलयान्तामुपाश्रिताः ।
कामोपभोगपरमा एतावदिति निश्चिताः ॥११॥
***cintām aparimeyāṁ ca pralayāntām upāśritāḥ* |**
***kāmopabhogaparamā etāvad iti niścitāḥ* ||11||**

आशापाशशतैर्बद्धाः कामक्रोधपरायणाः ।
ईहन्ते कामभोगार्थमन्यायेनार्थसञ्चयान् ॥१२॥
***āśāpāśaśatair baddhāḥ kāmakrodhaparāyaṇāḥ* |**
***īhante kāmabhogārtham anyāyenā'rthasañcayān* ||12||**

And they, held by innumerable desires unending till death, thinking of sensual enjoyments as the goal of life, deciding that there is nothing more that matters;

bound by hundreds of ties of hope prompted by passion and anger, they seek wealth by unrighteous means, to satisfy their thirst for enjoyment.

aparimeyām: Limitless.
pralayāntām: Till death.
upāśritāḥ: Holding on to.
āśāpāśaśataiḥ: By hundreds of ties of hope.
arthasañcayān: Multitudes of wealth.
īhante: Desire for.

What are the features of the demoniacal people?

(1) Their desires do not end till death.

(2) Their goal of life is sense-enjoyment.

(3) They deny anything higher.

(4) They are bound by desires.

(5) They are possessed by lust and anger.

(6) They gather wealth by unlawful means for the purpose of enjoying sensual pleasures.

Is there no end to wants and enjoyments? According to the demoniacal type of people, apparently there is no end of wants and enjoyments. They pursue them till death. They are slaves to their desires.

Thinking of objects is *cintā*. They are always thinking of objects that bring satisfaction. They hold on to those *cintā*s. Till they get that object of desire, they are restless. This is: (a) *aparimeyā*, i.e., limitless and (b) *pralayāntā*, i.e., continuing till death.

Kāma-upabhogaparamāḥ: Their highest aim is to satisfy their lust. They want to enjoy the objects of their desire.

Etāvat iti niścitāḥ: Till they get that particular object of desire, they do not consider anything higher than that. According to them ''this is it, I want it and I must get it''. Their minds do not concentrate on anything else for that period of time. From the moment they want, to the time they get it, no other thoughts enter their minds.

Unfortunately, they get carried away, and either strive to hold on to what they have got or to go after some other object. They keep on setting their eyes on hundreds of objects of desire (*āśāpāśaśataiḥ*) and get bound to those desires (*baddhāḥ*). Their sense of *yoga* is only for union with sensual objects and *kṣema* is for the safe keeping and protection of such objects. Their sense of *yoga-kṣema* is unfortunately for the wrong things.

Kāma-krodha-parāyaṇāḥ: Because of the desire to look after and safeguard what they have got, they go through phases of anger. Desire and anger become their way of life. When they do not or cannot get what they want, they get angry. When they find that they are going to lose what they have or if they actually lose them, they get angry as well. We know that there is no such thing as permanence (in relation to objects of the world). Death, disease, decay, etc. affect the objects.

Let us take the example of a famous painting on sale at an auction. The demoniacal-natured person, if he sets his eye on it, will constantly think of obtaining that. If he has not got the means to buy it, he gets angry at himself and his people. He strives hard to get it. When he gets it, he has to keep it safe, guard it and insure it. Depending on its value, his efforts at guarding it become stronger. He cannot even take it with him freely wherever he goes. He is frightened of losing it. Like this, desires grow and bind the person to constant action, and restlessness develops.

Kāmabhogārtham (for enjoying the objects of the world) and **arthasañcayāya** (for collecting, hoarding wealth): they even resort to *anyāya* (unlawful means). They are prepared to cheat, steal or hurt others in pursuit of their desire. Their life is a cycle of *kāma* and *krodha*. And from what we learnt in chapter 2, it eventually leads to their destruction. But, *alas,* they are not aware of it and do not even listen to good advice.

इदमद्य मया लब्धमिदं प्राप्स्ये मनोरथम् ।
इदमस्तीदमपि मे भविष्यति पुनर्धनम् ॥१३॥

idam adya mayā labdham imaṁ prāpsye manoratham |
idam astīdam api me bhaviṣyati punar dhanam ||13||

''Now this is gained by me, this desire I shall obtain, this is mine and this wealth also shall be mine hereafter.''

adya: Now.
bhaviṣyati: Shall be.

The Lord is now painting the attitude of the demoniacal person. As we can see in this and the following three verses, it is full of 'I' and 'mine'

Idam adya mayā labdham: ''Now this is gained by me.''

If he gets anything, automatically he gives the credit to himself. He does not consider that the real person to give anything is the Lord. If he passes an exam, he pats himself on the back. He has no humbleness. He feels proud. If he had cheated or deceived or stolen the object, he has already forgotten that.

Idaṁ manorathaṁ prāpsye: ''This desire I shall obtain''. Instead of being satisfied with what he has achieved, he would immediately look forward to something else.

Let us take the example of a student who has passed his exams and qualified to work in his subject of study. He should find out about the work, do the work properly. Instead, he starts planning what are the things he wants. ''I want a big house, a nice car, I want to enjoy a superb holiday'', etc. is all his thoughts are about. He has no time to concentrate on what he has to do. He starts stretching his feet on the bed beyond the boundaries of the bed.

Or let us take another example. A person is interested in collecting valuables. After getting one antique item, he sets his eyes on another. He starts planning on methods of obtaining it and there is no limit to the number of objects he wants to acquire.

Idam asti: (This is mine). As soon as he gets something, he considers it to be his and his only. He has no idea of sharing it with others. One is supposed to share what he has. There should not be any sense of 'ego'.

Idam api punaḥ me dhanaṁ bhaviṣyati: ''This wealth shall also be mine again.'' The demoniacal person sets his eye on another desire. He even makes up his mind what next object shall be his. He does not care for any values. He keeps going on and on and getting more and more objects of desire.

The Lord in chapter 2, verse 70, on the character of the *sthita-prajña* says that sense-objects should not provoke any ripples in one's mind. So, one can say that the demoniacal man is demonstrating *asthira prajñā*. Outward objects bring ripple after ripple of desire from the sense-organs.

असौ मया हतः शत्रुर्हनिष्ये चापरानपि ।
ईश्वरोऽहमहं भोगी सिद्धोऽहं बलवान्सुखी ।।१४।।
***asau mayā hataḥ śatrur haniṣye cāparān api* |**
***īśvaro'ham ahaṁ bhogī siddho'haṁ balavān sukhī* ||14||**

''This enemy has been slain by me, and others also I shall destroy. I am the Lord, I am the enjoyer, I am capable of achieving my ambitions, I am mighty and happy.''

aparān api: Others also.
haniṣye: Shall kill.
siddhaḥ: Achieving things desired.

Asau mayā hataḥ śatruḥ: (This enemy is destroyed by me). In his battle to acquire things, the demoniacal person would have to win the object from other persons wanting to get the same object. In days of yore, including Arjuna's time, one had to kill the enemies to obtain the land.

At the present-day, the word killing is used to mean 'destroy'. We see that in cut-throat businesses, one man's profit is another man's loss. One tends to forget that money just does not come from nowhere. It has to come from some source. A millionaire winner in pools gets the money from millions of punters. A businessman makes his profit from his customers.

The demoniacal person is happy that he has destroyed such and such a competitor and won the other person's business.

Haniṣye aparān api: (And others also I will destroy). The ambitious person, on climbing one step of the ladder, is immediately looking at the other steps. A politically ambitious person starts a career as a councillor and has ambition to become the leader of that party and the country. He is planning a game of chess where he is ready to kill anybody that comes in his way. Cunning, cheating, and destroying do not matter to him. He is determined to destroy others and achieve success.

The same ''philosophy'' applies in big business. One would want to be the chief of that business empire.

Īśvaro aham: (I am the Lord). At every step of success, the demoniacal person considers himself to be the Lord. He does not consider anybody else to be equal to him. If there is somebody higher than him, he would plan to uproot that person and usurp his position.

Unfortunately, in this process, the person does not realise he is intoxicated. He does not see the danger to himself in his actions to achieve success. The success one gets from proper and pure methods is more satisfying. An *āsuric* person forgets this truth.

Ahaṁ bhogī, ahaṁ siddhaḥ, balavān, sukhī: He thinks that he is the enjoyer. Whatever he achieves, he wants to enjoy it himself. He now feels confident that he can achieve anything and that he is all-powerful. He totally disregards and forgets the ways he took to achieve it. He considers himself to be the happiest person on earth. He has no capacity to look forward to his own future problems that will end in his downfall. Hence, such a person is called diabolically fallen.

आढ्योऽभिजनवानस्मि कोऽन्योऽस्ति सदृशो मया ।
यक्ष्ये दास्यामि मोदिष्य इत्यज्ञानविमोहिताः ।।१५।।
***āḍhyo'bhijanavān asmi ko'nyo'sti sadṛśo mayā* I**
***yakṣye dāsyāmi modiṣya ity ajñānavimohitāḥ* II15II**

"I am rich, I am born in a great family, who else is equal to me? I will give, I will perform sacrifice, I will rejoice". Thus they are deluded by ignorance.

āḍhya: Rich.
sadṛśa: Equal.
yakṣye: I will perform sacrifice.
dāsyāmi: Will give.
modiṣye: Will rejoice.

Such *āsuric* persons always live in self-glory. They gloat over their richness or family connections. According to them there is nobody equal to them. At every level of climbing the ladder of success, they look down at people below. They do not have the capacity to look up. Actually, they would feel dizzy if they were to look up but unfortunately they do not realise it.

They have a very strong sense of ego even in what they give away. They do not know the real meaning of "giving away what one has". They all have an actual reason for giving things. They want others to know about their generosity. They want to get something in return for what they give. They will not give a single penny away without calculating what they are going to get back for it.

The Lord says that such people are deluded by ignorance (*ajñāna-vimohitāḥ*). Their power makes them deluded. They are caught in the trap of *rajo-guṇa*. They live in ignorance. They are stuck in *tamo-guṇa*. Their life is not reflected through a clear glass. It is darkened with *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* has no chance to shine forth.

अनेकचित्तविभ्रान्ता मोहजालसमावृताः ।
प्रसक्ताः कामभोगेषु पतन्ति नरकेऽशुचौ ॥१६॥

aneka-citta-vibhrāntā moha-jāla-samāvṛtāḥ ।
prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu patanti narake'śucau ॥16॥

Bewildered by many fancies, caught in the snare of delusion, addicted to sensual enjoyment, they fall into foul hell.

prasaktāḥ: Deeply attached.
patanti: Fall.
anekacittavibhrāntāḥ: Caught by many fancies.
mohajāla-samāvṛtāh: Surrounded by the snare of delusions.

What is the ultimate fate of the demoniacal-natured persons? This is answered here. They ultimately fall into hell. The Lord uses the adjective 'foul' to describe hell. One should note that the Lord has said, "they fall into foul hell". He has not said they go to hell. There is a subtle difference in the word used which makes a great difference.

Heaven and hell are not two separate entities as such. It is we who make hell or heaven of our own lives. Most of the time we are neither happy nor unhappy. We are then said to be in the world. Sometimes we are happy and on occasions we are extremely happy. This, we say is, ''heavenly happiness''. We think we are the happiest people on earth. We create the heaven in our mental attitude to happiness.

And, there are times when we are very unhappy for a variety of reasons. Death, illness, injury, loss of honour to ourselves or our loved ones make us feel that we are in hell. Hell is again a place we create in our minds as a result of our suffering at the time. We do not take notice of others at that time.

Why do men fall into hell? This is also answered briefly here. Three reasons are given which totally cover our ways of living.

(a) **Anekacittavibhrāntāḥ:** We are bewildered by many fancies. We fancy so many things. We want this, we want that. There is no end to our fancies. We create a spider's web with all the desires. Some desires get stronger and stronger. We plan to fulfil our fancies. This planning to fulfil so many desires gets us into a state of bewilderment. We do not know where to go first, what to do, etc. for all such fancies. We lose our power of concentration.

(b) **Mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ:** We also get trapped in the objects we possess (because of our desires). We get bewildered with actions needed to keep them safe with us and of course they breed new desires as well. We get deluded with all possessions.

(c) **Kāmabhogeṣu prasaktāḥ:** (Deeply immersed in sensual enjoyment). We get trapped in the so-called momentary pleasures of what we possess and dreaming of pleasures from objects we are planning to get. We start living in the dream-world of enjoying them. We forget the harmful effects they have on us and on our family and friends and on the society as well. Our work gets side-tracked, our intellect gets totally clouded, and we lose our sense of judgement.

We fall into such a foul hell. We pay the penalty sooner or later. We have examples of drunken people involved in road accidents with horrific injuries to themselves or their family members or members of the public. We have gone through many phases of sexually transmitted diseases and now we have the demon 'Aids' amidst us. Is this not foul hell? Can we not build a heaven again?

Yes, we can. Just as more and more people with *āsuric* tendencies build a hell in this world, the good people can together develop divine qualities and build a heaven in this world.

आत्मसंभाविताः स्तब्धा धनमानमदान्विताः ।
यजन्ते नामयज्ञैस्ते दम्भेनाविधिपूर्वकम् ॥१७॥
ātmasaṁbhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhanamānamadānvitāḥ ।
yajante nāmayajñais te dambhenāvidhipūrvakam ॥17॥

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं च संश्रिताः ।
मामात्मपरदेहेषु प्रद्विषन्तोऽभ्यसूयकाः ॥१८॥
ahaṁkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ ca saṁśritāḥ ।
mām ātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣanto'bhyasūyakāḥ ॥18॥

Self-conceited, stubborn, filled with pride and intoxicated with wealth, they perform sacrifices only for namesake with great ostentation, contrary to the laws of the śāstras.

Given to egotism, power, pride, lust and hatred, these malicious people hate Me in their own bodies and in those of others.

ātmasaṁbhāvitāḥ: Glorifying themselves.
stabdhāh: Stubborn, devoid of humility (before elders).
pradviṣantaḥ: Hating.
abhyasūyakāḥ: Envious.
avidhipūrvakam: Against the laws of *śāstra*s.
nāmayajñaiḥ: Sacrifices for namesake.
yajante: Perform (the sacrifice).

The Lord repeats again how these *āsuric* people behave.

We have to reflect on the meaning of *yajña*. *Yajña* in the olden days was a ritual wherein one put some oblations in the sacred fire, pleased the *deva* of their desire, and invoked such *deva*s who fulfilled their desire. The result obtained was supposed to be shared with all others.

For example, during a drought, they performed *yajña* to please Varuṇa, the God of rain. They all shared in the benefits obtained from rain. For the same *yajña*, Lord Kṛṣṇa has given a different meaning here in the *Gītā*.

Yajña is selfless work. Each person puts his best in his field of work, he pleases the *deva* of that work, and invokes that *deva*. The *deva* blesses him with success in that field of work. The person then shares the success for the benefit of all. It is a form of cooperative work, which results in a happy community. In other words, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is asking us to replace the word 'ritual' with 'work'. Instead of ''ritual worship'', it should be ''work is worship''.

What type of *yajña*s do the *āsuric* people perform? The *āsuric* people do the work for namesake and not for the welfare of mankind. Let us take an example. The post of prime-minister, and a member of parliament, are meant for the welfare of the people of that land. The Head of a state is meant to keep the welfare of his people as his priority. If such a person is of *āsuric* type, he will hold the post for namesake and use the offices for his personal benefit. He gives great lectures on how sincere he is in his work, how much he cares for his men. This is outward show only. He works as *ātma-saṁbhāvita*, i.e., for self-glorification. It is a great evil in *āsuric* person. He is said to be ignorant.

He therefore becomes stubborn (*stabdhaḥ*). He does not listen to the advice of good men (he shows no humility in the presence of elders). He is intoxicated with wealth and filled with pride (*dhana-māna-madānvitaḥ*) owing to his position in society. All his acts (*yajña*s) are for namesake only (*nāma-yajña*s) and filled with ostentatious devotion (*dambhena*). He does not believe in *śāstra*s, he is ignorant of them. All his actions tend to be against the teachings of the *śāstra*s (*avidhipūrvakam*). His acts, instead of showing *bhakti*, show his egotistical nature. He has no devotion because he does not believe in God.

Because of ego, his actions show animal instincts. He loses his dignity owing to his intoxication. He is intoxicated with pride, lust, hatred and his own power. Even one of these demoniacal qualities is enough to pull down a person. One can imagine what a terrible fall such a person will have with all these demoniacal qualities together.

Owing to his intoxication, he starts hating (*pradviṣati*) every other person who comes in his way. He deliberately humiliates such a person. He envies such (*abhyasuyati*) a person. To get what he wants or reach where he wants to, he will belittle others. This is another great evil in an *āsuric* person. He totally forgets that by hating and envying others, he is actually hating the Lord. The Lord is not only in us but is also in everybody else.

To hate others is to hate the Lord and to love others is to love the Lord. In chapter 12, verse 13, one of the characteristics of a devotee, is said to be *adveṣtā sarvavbhūtānām* (without hatred towards all beings).

तानहं द्विषतः क्रूरान्संसारेषु नराधमान् ।
क्षिपाम्यजस्रमशुभानासुरीष्वेव योनिषु ॥१९॥
tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krūrān saṁsāreṣu narādhamān **|**
kṣipāmy ajasram aśubhān āsurīṣv eva yoniṣu **||19||**

Those who hate Me, (and who are) cruel, impure in mind and thought, the worst among men, I hurl them ever into the wombs of demons only.

dviṣataḥ: Hating Me.
ajasram: Ever.
kṣipāmi: Hurl.

This verse beautifully gives a graphic description of the laws of nature. The Lord is the supreme justice in the court of law which governs the entire universe.

This law of the Lord is eternal. It is simple, and straightforward. The Lord has given the law of *dharma*. Anybody who acts contrary to *dharma* will be punished. The Lord uses the word "*tān aham*". It means He is the judge and the dispenser of the punishment to those evil-doers who hate the Lord (in themselves and in others).

The Lord calls men of *āsuric* tendencies ‘‘*narādhamas*’’. They are the lowest form of men. In chapter 4, the Lord says that He is born to destroy evil doers (*vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām*). These *āsuric* men are cruel to the living beings around.

The Lord says He "hurls them" (*kṣipāmi*). Where does He hurl them? "*Saṁsāreṣu āsurīṣveva yoniṣu*". Into the wombs of demons and into the cycle of births and deaths. He uses the adjective "*ajasram*" (always).

As long as one continues to be *āsuric* in nature, he will be born in the wombs of demons only. He will continue to be *āsuric* again in the new birth. We have to analyse this statement in greater detail.

So far in the *Gītā*, we have learnt that every man is responsible to himself for his actions. We have understood about *vāsanā*s. Our actions are due to our thoughts. As *āsuric* type of men, our thoughts will be of *āsuric* type only. We have to realise the law of action and reaction. Each action has a set reaction. Good actions produce good reactions. The mind is filled with good thoughts.

Bad action produces bad reaction. Bad reactions leave bad thoughts in the mind. If one dies while living the life of a demon, his mind has *vāsanā*s of an *āsuric* nature only. His soul travels till it finds a suitable medium to express such *vāsanā*s. As they are of *āsuric* type, the medium will be to encourage development of *āsuric* qualities. The soul has to get rid of all past *vāsanā*s (*saṁskāra*s). Bad thoughts also need a bad outlet to come out. This process continues always.

If we find a thorn on the road or a glass piece, we tend to pick it up and throw it away where one does not tread on it and get hurt. Every time we find such hurtful objects, we do the same (i.e., throw). Suppose we find a grenade on the road. We get a specialist to pick it up, who takes it up carefully, finds a safe place and throws it away. He throws it away as far as he can.

Literally, the Lord as the specialist, picks such *āsuric* men and throws them away, always. There is no exception. It is the 'Eternal Law'. Such men have to be born into *saṁsāra* again and again. They are *puruṣādhama*s. Where is the end to it? The Lord is not only dispenser of punishment but also dispenser of the fruits of good actions. Every little good act gets its due reward. Consciously or unconsciously we all do certain good deeds at times. There are some seeds of good in all of us. The very fact that we are born as humans is a proof that the Lord is merciful and has given us a chance to correct our faults. Suppose we consider that the worst *āsuric* men are born as reptiles and insects. Reptiles and insects do good in their own way. The earthworm works constantly and shifts soil. The snakes do eat rats and protect the crops from rats.

When we are born as humans, as a result of good acts (performed in reptile, insect lives), we are endowed with intellect. The medium of birth depends on the *vāsanā*s. It can be a good or bad medium. But, the fact remains that we are endowed with an intellect. As soon as we realise the truth, we get our due reward. Sage Vālmikī was a highway robber and suddenly changed into a saintly person.

When we clear the bad *vāsanā*s and accumulate new good *vāsanā*s, we are on the way to becoming *Puruṣottama*. If we start accumulating bad *vāsanā*s, we will become *narādhama*s and suffer.

At all times, the Lord only (*aham*) is the law-giver. If we ask, "O God, if You throw me always into *saṁsāra*, when shall it end?" The Lord has already said that He will protect His devotees. We should therefore try to become His devotees, we should have faith in Him, we should develop *sāttvika* qualities, we should not hate others, we should not be cruel to others. As soon as we develop the twenty-six divine virtues, the cycle changes and we become one with *Paramātmā*.

The present-day court of law gives punishment for crime but does not reward good work. The society we live in, gives us the reward for good work. Punishing evil in society is a common factor in all countries. Evil destroys society and the nation. Good, decent, moral living will uplift the society. There is no need for prison in a town where there is no crime. The prison and judiciary system should act as a deterrent to crime.

Similarly, the *śāstra*s, the *Veda*s, the religious texts try to deter crime in their own way. The religion acts for the 'thoughts' in man. No one apart from oneself can know what one's thoughts are. If we can kill the evil thoughts as soon as they are born, if we do not allow them to grow and accumulate in our minds, all our actions will be good. Such a society will prosper and its subjects will live happily.

The *Gītā* and all our religious texts are real help to us in the process of purifying ourselves. By giving details of the results for bad thoughts, they are warning us of the consequences of such thoughts. So, it is up to us to go deep into *Gītā* and similar texts and use our intellect and become good persons.

आसुरीं योनिमापन्ना मूढा जन्मनि जन्मनि ।
मामप्राप्यैव कौन्तेय ततो यान्त्यधमां गतिम् ।।२०।।

āsurīṁ yonim āpannā mūḍhā janmani janmani |
mām aprāpyaiva kaunteya tato yānty adhamāṁ gatim ||20||

Entering into demoniac wombs, and deluded, not attaining Me, birth after birth, they thus fall into a condition still lower than that..

aprāya eva: Not attaining.
yānti: Fall into.

This is a continuation of the last verse. If one continues to go from bad to worse in his *āsuric* behaviour, he will fall into the worst type of births. The punishment always fits the crime. Because of past *saṁskāras*, their *guṇa*s delude them. Instead of remembering their mistakes, they continue to do evil. Normally, one can mould a person only in his childhood and younger days. It is difficult to change one's character in his adult life. We can bend a tree when it is a small plant but not when it is fully grown. *Āsuric* men, because of the environment they are born into, do not get a chance to get moulded properly in their younger days. But there is still a chance to mould them, but only in the younger days of their lives. It is therefore our duty and our society's duty to shape our youngsters. They are our future generation. They will rule us. If we want a peaceful old age, we must look after our youngsters now. We must not only cultivate divine qualities in ourselves but also let our children develop divine qualities.

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।
कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥२१॥

trividhaṁ narakasyedaṁ dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ |
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayaṁ tyajet **||21||**

These triple gateways of hell, desire, anger and greed, are destructive of one's Self. Therefore one should abandon the triple evil.

Kāma (desire), *krodha* (anger), and *lobha* (greed) are together termed as *duṣṭatrayam* (the three evils). They are the triple gates into hell. We reach hell by our actions. We have discussed before that hell and heaven are not two separate entities but are worlds created by us through our actions. A happy world we live in, is heaven and a bad world we live in, is hell. It is not the physical world but the mental world. It is the state we experience in different situations in our lives.

Desire is our first enemy. The more we think of obtaining an object, it becomes an object of strong desire. When we do not get it or when we get it but lose it, we get angry. On the other hand, when we win an object, we tend to go for more and more of the same or new ones that give us sensual pleasures. This then is greed. We thirst for more.

These three, therefore, lead us to our downfall. How to overcome the three evils? From our knowledge of the *Gītā*, we know the ways to overcome desire, anger and greed.

Desire: To be overcome by dispassion (*vairāgya*). One should realise that the object of desire does not bring permanent joy. The pleasure is only ephemeral.

Anger: To be overcome by love. Love can turn anger away. An action undertaken in anger can be turned the opposite way by love.

Greed: To be overcome by detachment. If one can learn to develop detachment in attachment (chapter 3), *niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga*, one will not be greedy anymore.

How do we find these three evils which are inbred in us? By using the light of knowledge. This is symbolically represented as the trident of Lord Śiva.

> एतैर्विमुक्तः कौन्तेय तमोद्वारैस्त्रिभिर्नरः ।
> आचरत्यात्मनः श्रेयस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥२२॥
> ***etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamodvārais tribhir naraḥ ।***
> ***ācaraty ātmanaḥ śreyas tato yāti paraṁ gatim ॥22॥***
>
> *The man freed from the triple gateways to darkness, O Kaunteya, practises what is good for him and attains the highest goal.*

This verse gives two practices needed for attaining *mokṣa.* The first practice is to free oneself from the three evils of *kāma, krodha*, and *lobha*. As we discussed in the last verse, they are the gateways to hell. The Lord says they lead one to *tamas.* Any one of these is enough to make us ignorant of "The Truth". All the three together will lead to total darkness.

One should therefore get freed from the three evils. *Mukta* means freed. But the Lord emphasises total freedom and so he has used the word *vimuktaḥ*. He says *etair vimuktaḥ* (totally freed from these).

The second practice is to look after one's well-being; *ācaratyātmanaḥ śreyaḥ,* The Lord says. What does it mean? *Ātmanaḥ* means one's own Self. *Śreyaḥ* means well-being. The person who practises what is good for him will, according to the Lord, achieve *mokṣa.*

Of course, getting oneself freed from *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha* is itself a good act. Dropping a bad quality on its own is not sufficient to achieve the final goal. One must not be bad and in addition one must be good. Both are essential. One always says, "don't be a bad boy", but one should be saying, "be good, don't be a bad boy".

By freeing oneself from the three evils, one will lift oneself from *tamas.* By practising good, one will go from *rajas* to *sattva.* It is not only practising what is good for the physical body but also includes practising what is good for the subtle body (mind/

intellect). Developing divine qualities is a good habit. We should always question our thoughts and actions. We should eliminate bad thoughts and actions. We should always keep in mind the goal which we want to achieve. We should ask for help from our elders and *gurus* and also help from scriptures (*svādhyāya*).

By practising what is good for oneself, one lives in contentment. Such a person, automatically, contributes to peace of those around him. This is a slow process and cannot come overnight. But it will lead one to *parāṁ gatim* (*mokṣa*). He becomes a *jīvanmukta* and attains Godhood.

This process can be compared to the unfolding of a bud into a flower. By freeing from the three evils, one can transform the seed of goodness into a bud. By developing the twenty-six divine virtues, the bud blossoms into a flower. A good gardener can appreciate the beauty in the transformation of a bud into a flower. Of course, the flower which is to be offered to God, is one's own flower of Divine virtue. Symbolically, it is a flower from the garden but really it has to be a flower from the garden inside our body, i.e., the intellect.

We can compare it in another way. To live a healthy life, one should first of all avoid bad foods. And one should also be eating good food. Only then can one be a totally healthy person. We must practise what is good physically and intellectually if we have to be freed from the bondage of life.

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥२३॥

yaḥ śāstravidhim utsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ ।
na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim ॥23॥

He who casts aside the scriptural injunctions, and acts under the pressure of desires, does not attain perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme goal.

utsṛjya: Casting aside.

Yaḥ sāstra vidhim utsṛjya: (The one who casts aside *śāstric* injunctions). This is a very important sentence. Everyone, who wants to achieve *mokṣa*, must follow the *śāstras*. There is no room for one to develop one's own philosophy in life.

Our ancient *ṛṣi*s were able to look thousands of years ahead and visualize the future nature of human life and behaviour. They foresaw many ills of the modern way of life and gave us guidelines as to how to avoid harming oneself. They have discussed theory of Truth and this is called "*brahma-vidyā*". They have given us methods of uniting with our inner Self and this is "*yoga-śāstra*". All our *Veda*s and *Upaṇisad*s are therefore called *brahma-vidyā* and they teach *yogaśāstra*.

All books that explain *brahma-vidyā* and *yogaśāstra* are called *prakaraṇa*s. For those, who cannot understand the *Veda*s and *Upaniṣads, prakaraṇas* give the lead. Great teachers like Śrī Śaṅkarācārya and others have written many explanatory *prakaraṇa*s.

Let us not be so swollen-headed as to develop our own philosophy in life. Whatever philosophy we follow must conform to what the *śāstra*s say. For those who do not follow the *śāstra*s but lead the life of fulfilling their own desires, the Lord says, there is no happiness. We all have to develop perfection (*siddhim*) if we have to achieve something in our life. This perfection to be achieved is called *puruṣārtha*.

What does *puruṣārtha* get us? It gets us 'bliss'. We do not get that kind of happiness which ends in sorrow. We will know the 'Truth'. We will attain knowledge. In short, we will achieve the state of *sat, cit* and *ānanda*. This, as we have discussed several times already, is our true nature (divine). We will achieve *mokṣa* "Those who do not follow the *śāstra*s, will not attain *mokṣa*", is a bold but simple truth which we ought to remember and follow.

If we buy any gadget in the shop, we get along with it an instruction leaflet. The instructions will let us know what the product is, how to assemble it, how to keep it safe and how to avoid dangers. If we do not follow the instruction, the product does not work or it gets damaged or causes damage. But the manufacturer does not take any responsibility for damages. We will have no ground to stand on in the court of law and we may end up by paying damages.

Similarly, when the body is formed, the Lord has given instructions on how to look after it. If, we elders do not do so, there is a possibility to bringing a "Frankenstein monster" into society. Also, when we mature, if we do not follow the *śāstras*, we will also end up as monsters. We destroy ourselves and our society.

"So, for heaven's sake, read, learn, follow the *śāstras*", is the Lord's message to all of us.

> तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।
> ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥२४॥
> ***tasmāc chāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryākāryavyavasthitau |***
> ***jñātvā śāstravidhānoktaṁ karma kartum ihārhasi ||24||***
>
> *Therefore, scriptures should be your authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known the commandments of the scriptures you should work here.*
>
> *arhasi*: You should do.

The Lord concludes this chapter by asking all of us to act as per the scriptures. To do so, we must know what *śāstras* are. We must learn from elders, teachers and the texts. We must do what they say. It is not blind faith, because the Lord is advocating it.

Tasmāt śāstram pramāṇam: Let *śāstras* be your authority. *Pramāṇa* in this context means 'authority'. You can quote the *śāstras* to support your way of work provided it fits in with the *śāstras*.

Kārya-akārya-vyavasthitau: (In determining right and wrong actions). Let *śāstras* tell you what is the right way to work and what is the wrong in the way one works.

Jñātvā: (Having known). Let us all know this 'Truth'.

Śāstravidhānoktam: (What is prescribed in the *śāstras*). Our *śāstras* have told us about *karma, vikarma* and *akarma.* They have given us laws of life from childhood to old age for every member of the society. They have given detailed description of the duties of a householder, of a king and of every class in society. Only on reading them, we should work. While working we should be referring to them to see if there are any mistakes. This leads one to become pure, and purity leads one to *mokṣa*.

Karma kartum ihārhasi: " You should work in this world", is the Lord's command. We are all placed in certain positions in this world. There is a purpose in putting us in that position. If we do not do what is expected of us we are not fit to sit in that position. We should be thrown out of that position. Performance of duty as per the *śāstra*s is the only way to attain Knowledge.

Our *ṛṣi*s had known what we of the present-day call 'the route maps'. If we travel to any place, we follow the map. The maps give us directions to reach our destination. Similarly, the destination for us is to attain the state of *Paramātmā*. We should go back where we came from but have forgotten how to go back. There is a path to reach that place. That grand path has many side-ways which join it. We must realise where we are in the map and go from where we are placed to our final destination. We cannot jump from where we are to another path we like to take. We are already placed in a particular path by our birth and early childhood.

Let us always keep the map (*śāstras*) and know where we are (present position). We should then plan our route (*karma,* action) and gradually proceed. Let us keep what we need for the journey. The *śāstra*s have given those details also. They are 'divine qualities'. Let us drop what we do not need. Let us throw away what hinders our journey, namely our *āsuric* qualities. We will then reach our grand destination safely.

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे दैवासुरसंपद्विभागयोगो नाम षोडशोऽध्यायः॥

iti śrīmad-bhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ
yogaśāstre śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde daivāsura-saṁpad-vibhāga-
yogo nāma ṣoḍaśo'dhyāyaḥ //

CHAPTER 17

ŚRADDHĀTRAYA-VIBHĀGA-YOGA

Śraddhā means faith. In the present context it means 'a system of religious doctrines believed in'. Faith also means 'trust' or 'reliance'.

The faithful actions of any person can be classified according to the *guṇa*s of the person. We have already discussed about *guṇa*s in chapter 14. A person's *śraddhā* therefore can be *sāttvika*, *rājasika* or *tāmasika*.

A detailed division of faith according to the three *guṇa*s is *śraddhātraya-vibhāga-yoga*. In this chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa examines the faithful activities of any person in his various daily endeavours. He discusses the eating habits, dedicated activities (*yajña*), activities of self-denial (*tapas*), and charitable activities (*dāna*) of man.

The last chapter ended with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's assertion that *śāstra*s are the final court of appeal. Our actions should be according to the *śāstra*s, He said.

How can one know the *śāstra*s? An average person goes through a busy lifestyle. It is not enough if he is good? Is blind faith in God not enough? What would happen if a person's blind faith is contrary to the *śāstra*s? In chapter 4, verse 39, faith has been described as the fuel needed for one's action. This faith comes from an impelling force spontaneously within each of us and propelled by it, we act in all fields of life. Faith gives us the direction for our progress on the spiritual path; faith gives us determination to reach our destination in life.

Our subtle body (mind/intellect), due to our past thoughts and actions, has this indwelling faith in it. This is expressed through our *guṇa*s as actions. If, in our actions, the noble ideas of *śāstra*s are present, *śraddhā* gives it the capacity to show them outwardly. The more faith we have, the stronger will be that particular action.

An university student who has faith in what he is studying and who is determined to achieve success will show it in his dedication to study and understand the subject.

अर्जुन उवाच
ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।
तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥१॥

arjuna uvāca
***ye śāstravidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayā 'nvitāḥ* ।**
***teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvam āho rajas tamaḥ* ॥1॥**

O Kṛṣṇa, those who perform worship with faith, though contrary to śāstras, *what is their condition? Is it* sāttvika, rājasika *or* tāmasika?

utsṛjya: Set aside.
śraddhayānvitāḥ: Endowed with faith.
yajante: Worship.
niṣṭhā: Condition.
āho: Or.

Śāstras and religious texts are easily available, if one wants them. But, they are not easy to understand. Many people do not have the intellectual capacity to assimilate or understand the *śāstras*. There are some who are indifferent to *śāstras* but still are not *āsuric* in their behaviour. They all believe in God, they have faith in God. They worship God in various ways. But, because they do not have theoretical knowledge of *śāstras*, their actions may be contrary to the laws. Arjuna, on behalf of humanity, has put forward such a question. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has endeavoured in this chapter to answer it.

Niṣṭhā here means condition. If we do not know the *śāstras*, what will be our condition? Just by blind faith in God, can we get salvation? Where will we go when we do things contrary to the *śāstras*? This is a very pertinent question by Arjuna which applies to most of us. We should therefore analyse this chapter in detail.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ।।२।।

śrī bhagavān uvāca
***trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṁ sā svabhāvajā* |**
***sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tāṁ śṛṇu* ||2||**

Born of the nature of beings, the faith is three-fold, sāttvika, rājasika *and* tāmasika. *Now hear about it.*

In reply to Arjuna's question, the Lord says that faith is three-fold—*sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*. This embraces the faiths of all human beings. They are one of the three types.

He also says that it is the inborn nature of every person. It is born of *svabhāva*, i.e., *svabhāvaja*. According to our past *saṁskāras*, we are born with different objects of faith. It determines the nature of our worship.

Faith determines the texture of our thought-imprints (*vāsanās*). These thought-imprints turn into our future actions. What we desired, what faith we had in that desire, will turn out to be our actual action later. This entirely depends upon our faith in that desire. The more faith I have in the field of medicine, the more desire I will have to become a doctor and my actions will direct me in that field. The more faith I have in the dedication of the noble profession, the more desire I will have to lead a noble professional's life. This will express as my future noble actions. Faith will add fuel to my actions. The results will be dependent on what faith I have in any field of action I want to pursue. My actions will be according to my inner disposition.

So, *śraddhā* is the essence of man. It is my quality. It depends on my previous faithful desires that have not been fulfilled earlier.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ।।३।।

***sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata* |**
***śraddhāmayo'yaṁ puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ* ||3||**

> *The faith of each person is in accordance with his nature. O Bhārata, the very essence of the* jīva *is faith. What his* śraddhā *is, that he is verily.*

sattvānurūpā: According to he nature of the mind.
ayam: This.
śraddhāmayaḥ: Of the form of qualities.

Sattvānurūpā: Here *sattva* does not mean the *sattva-guṇa*. It is used here to mean 'the mind' of a person.

The mind (subtle body) carries all the imprints of one's desires. It is a storehouse of desires. What shape the desires have (*rūpa*) reflects through his mind as future actions. *Sattvānurūpa* therefore means ''according to the nature of the person''. According to the faith in which an object of desire was stored in one's mind but not fulfilled for one reason or the other, that person's faith will dictate his future actions in the new birth.

The *jīva* is the Soul reflected through the mind and intellect. The mind is therefore the ''real *jīva*''. It is not the Soul. So, the essential nature of the mind is what the mind has stored. Faith is therefore the 'essence of *jīva*'. Each one of us is that faith, qualified by past *vāsanā*s. We all exist in our *śraddhā*.

Yo yat-śraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ: As is man's faith so is he. We adopt the faith we are born with and become that faith in that life.

Some people may ask this question. A man might change his faith in the middle of his present existence. How do you account for that? To answer this, we go back to the base roots again. Birth and death do not mean birth and death of the physical body. It is birth and death of the type of existence. We change from childhood to adulthood. Childhood is dead and adulthood is born. It does not happen overnight. It is a gradual process of change from one existence to another. We can therefore have faiths expressed in different stages of our present life. We still are what our faith is at that particular time.

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान्यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥४॥

yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣarakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ |
pretān bhūtagaṇāṁś cānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ ||4||

The sāttvika *men worship the* devas. *The* rājasika *men worship* yakṣas *and* rākṣasas. *The* tāmasika *men worship the ghosts and the hosts of* bhūtas.

pretān: Hosts of departed souls (ghosts).

All the three types of men have one thing in common. They all perform worship. We should therefore look at the meaning of worship.

Ordinarily, worship means religious reverence and adoration of God. In this context, the reverence is to those of 'high station'. Why do we worship? We worship to fulfil some desire or wish. We perform invocations and hope to achieve the benefits from the invocations. The invocations are performed in some altar or others. We show our devotion to the object in the altar.

The similarity between the three groups ends at the point of worship. Each group worships in a different way, which generally fits in with the qualities of men of that nature.

The *sāttvika* men usually believe in the higher and divine. They worship different gods and *deva*s. They believe in some power higher than themselves and show their respect to that power. Their worship reflects their nobler quality. They go to the temples, churches, mosques, etc. and offer their prayers. They look for divine help in fulfilling their wish.

The *rājasika* are said to worship *yakṣa*s and *rākṣasa*s. In chapter 10, verse 23, we have described *yakṣa*s. *Yakṣa*s are brothers of Kubera who is the Lord of wealth. *Rākṣasas* are men of demoniacal power. They are very strong and generally men are frightened of their power.

Rājasika men, because of their own weakness, tend to worship those in power or those who are wealthier than they. They have a personal motive of getting benefit for themselves from association with such people. They keep on changing their allegiance depending on the wealth or position or power of the person. They aim finally to become as wealthy or as powerful as the person they adore and worship.

The *tāmasika* men worship *preta*s and *bhūta*s who are dead spirits. The malicious and vicious powers of dead spirits are invoked by *tāmasika* men. In other words, they are thoughtless men of criminal intentions. To fulfil some ugly, personal sensegratification, the *tāmasika* men invoke the help of bad elements. Technically the word used here is *preta*s and *bhūtagaṇa*s. Really speaking, it simply means the bad elements in society. These bad elements are as good as dead (*pretas* and *bhūtagaṇa*s). The society has nothing to gain or benefit from them. But, the *tāmasika* men adore such wicked people and try to fulfil their desires. Hired thugs and gunmen equal to the *pretas* and *bhūtagaṇa*s.

Some may ask a question. Are there *pretas* and *bhūta*s? The simple answer is, we do not know. Does it matter for us? If they are associated with bad actions and end in harm to us or to others, let us not know about them. It is always better to be far away from bad elements than being near them with a curiosity to know and understand them. Nearness to them may impart their attitude to us and before we know, we may become one of them.

In short, each one of us invokes the power we expect to get protection from. If it is *sāttvika*, one goes to the God, *deva*s and good people. If it is *rājasika*, one goes to the rich and powerful and if it is *tāmasika*, one goes to those with criminal intentions. We get individual satisfaction from such worship.

In course of time, one will find, if he analyses, how long he gets satisfaction from the different types of worship. He will also find what good or harmful effects it will have on him and his associates by his type of worship.

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।
दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ।।५।।

aśāstravihitaṁ ghoraṁ tapyante ye tapo janāḥ |
dambhāhaṁkāra-saṁyuktāḥ kāma rāga balānvitāḥ ||5||

कर्षयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।
मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान् ॥६॥

karṣayantaḥ śarīrasthaṁ bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ |
māṁ caivāntaḥ śarīrasthaṁ tān viddhy āsuraniścayān ||6||

Those men who practise horrible austerities, not enjoined by the śāstras *who are possessed by pretension and pride, impelled by lust, longing and animal strength,*

Senselessly torturing all the elements in the body, and Me also dwelling within the body, devoid of understanding, you may know such person to be of demoniacal nature.

bhūtagrāmam: Aggregate of elements.
karṣayantaḥ: Torturing.
acetasaḥ: Devoid of understanding.
tapyant: Practice

Aśāstravihitaṁ ghoraṁ tapyante ye tapo janāh: *Tapas* is austerity of the body and mind. 'Austere' means harsh, severe, strict, simple or without luxury. (It is a Greek word 'austeros', which also means harsh).

The real purpose of *tapas* as instructed by the *śāstras* is to purify the mind. One has to purify the mind of evil tendencies. Several methods of denial are advised by the *śāstras* to purify the mind. Unfortunately, the real meaning of *tapas* has been misunderstood. One tends to associate *tapas* with severe physical harsh denials. These result in harm to the person and others. There are some, who, also because of misunderstanding, perform *tapas* with over-enthusiasm.

In the olden days, from the *Purāṇic* stories, we find that men went and stayed in the open air, standing on one leg for months and years, meditating on God. We see people who fast for days, in the name of religion. We come across people who roll on the ground at the temples in the severe hot sun.

All these and many others cause only physical exhaustion. They do not help in meditation on the God. The mind cannot withstand physical torture of the body. All such people are simply ignorant. *Śāstra*s never said or advocated physical torture. Devoid of Godly spirit, some people undertake austerity only as a show. They are egotistical.

Kāmarāgabalānvitāḥ: If one is attached to the worldly objects around, if one thinks that wordly power is enough, such a person is an *asura*. Lust and longing for sensual pleasures take away the divine qualities in such a person. Such a person is not fit to practise *tapas*. To obtain spiritual upliftment, one should kill these animal instincts.

We have again from *Purāṇa*s, come to know that demons like Rāvaṇa performed severe austerities and they did get the blessing from the Lord for their *tapas*. But, they used the divine gift for their own and others' destruction.

Karṣayantaḥ bhūtagrāmaṁ śarīrastham acetasaḥ: They, out of ignorance, hurt the aggregate of body and sense-organs. *Śāstra*s have scientifically advocated some forms of self-denial to improve the health of a person. They advocate moderation. They suggest fasting on certain days of the year and advocate avoiding some types of food sometimes. They say so not only for the sake of bodily health but also to purify one's mind. Purity of mind is the final aim of the *śāstra*s. The *tapas* advocated by the *śāstra*s is the means to purify the mind. *Tapas* itself is not an end. Ignorance makes one misinterpret the meaning of *tapas*. Such *tapas* is *tāmasika*.

Māṁ caiva antaḥśarīrastam: The Lord says that He is inside all. By torturing the body, we are actually hurting the Lord inside. Really speaking, one cannot hurt the Lord. What it means is that the Lord remains imprisoned in such people and does not get a chance to come out. Severe austerity to the body is *hiṁsā* to oneself. *Ahiṁsā*, advocated by the Lord, is not only to others but also to one's own body. The body is a temple with the Lord inside. We should keep the temple clean. It should bring out serenity. It should look beautiful. It should welcome people to come and see the Lord inside. It should shine forth with the brilliant shine of knowledge inside.

Cruelty to the body spoils the beauty of the temple. This is *āsuric* cruelty and the Lord says that *śāstras* do not advocate such methods.

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।
यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमंशृणु ॥७॥

āhāras tv api sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ |
yajñas tapas tathā dānaṁ teṣāṁ bhedam imaṁ śṛṇu ||7||

The food dear to each of the three types of men is also three-fold, so also is sacrifice, austerity and dāna. *Now hear their difference.*

The Lord has now taken up the main theme of discussion in this chapter.

All of us show our inner nature in our actions. Our inner nature has all the three types of *guṇas* but only one type of *guṇa* expresses itself at any particular time.

By analysing our outward actions we can find out which type of *guṇa* we belong to. We must never analyse it to classify others. We have no right to classify anybody. We have no right to judge others. We should use the following description to reflect upon our own actions. These descriptions should be our guide to improve ourselves. It is human nature that we always try to analyse others. We can make use of that habit to improve ourselves.

If we see a person and analyse his actions, we start looking at his good and bad qualities in such actions. We should then put the question to ourselves. ''Have I shown these qualities in my actions? What actions are not good? What actions are good? Can I strengthen my good actions and can I stop my bad actions?'' We all have dormant divine potential inside us, and by self-analysis, we can bring it out. We will not only uplift ourselves but we will also make the world a better place to live in.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to describe the differences in food habits, sacrifices, austerities and charity in all of us. He starts on food habits first. Why? We have to eat food daily for our survival. Food helps in our physical development. Food also has a great influence on the mind. Certain foods have intoxicating effects on our minds and this reflects in our outer actions. Similarly, certain foods have a calmative effect on our minds and they keep our minds pure.

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः ।
रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्या आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥८॥
***āyuḥ-sattva-balārogya-sukha-prīti-vivardhanāḥ* |**
***rasyāḥ snigdhāḥ sthirā hṛdyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ* ||8||**

Foods which augment the life-span, which are savoury and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable are dear to the sāttvika *type of man.*

If we go to a doctor, or a dietitian, we expect him to give a lecture on our food habits. They mention all these requirements about the foods we eat.

Āyuḥ: The food we eat must increase our life-span. If we want to live up to a ripe old age, we must take great care of what we eat.

Sattva: The food we eat should be pure. Pure foods have a direct bearing on spiritual life. Ascetics in India have lived a pure and healthy life on fruits, root products and milk. They have increased their spiritual powers and expressed their divinity in all their actions. Pure food gives energy for meditative purposes.

Bala: The food should give us strength. We need to be strong to fight against ill health. We also need mental strength to control our animal instinct (for sensual enjoyment).

We were all busy in our younger days, trying to establish ourselves in society. When our children grow up and our responsibilities are reduced, we usually would have reached our middle age. If we do not have strength, we will find it difficult to recover from illness. A strong person in old age can still be active like a youth. But that strength he will have got from steady practice in correct and proper eating during his younger days. His teeth also will be strong and healthy and he will enjoy his food better eating it with his own teeth.

Ārogya: Eating food that gives us proper strength, will help us to fight against illnesses. Drinking milk daily will give us calcium and protein that will keep our bones strong. Women who go through pregnancy need extra strength for the growth of the baby in their wombs. Otherwise they will have weak bones which result in fractures from minor injuries. They also suffer backache. Eating less sweets and eating apples would keep the teeth strong and healthy. We lose energy in severe illnesses. If we are strong and healthy, we regain our energy quickly. Also, when we are ill, there will be a break in continuity in spiritual *sādhanā.*

Sukha-prīti: The food we eat should give us joy and cheerfulness. The *sāttvika* food will give *sukha* and *prīti.* It is not outward cheerfulness as in saying ''cheers'' and drinking alcoholic beverages. I means mental cheerfulness. Also, the Lord says, the food should be *rasya* (savoury), *snigdha* (oily, greasy), *sthira* (substantial) and *hṛdya* (agreeable). If we have to enjoy our food we need savoury, greasy foods. Grease does bring taste and also gives energy. Of course it has to be in moderation. The food has to be substantial for bodily requirements. It should not be too little or too much. For a hard manual labourer or an athlete, the doctors recommend a high calories intake. For a sedentary worker, a lower calorie intake is recommended. If we do not eat substantial food, we get hungry quickly. Hunger at work interferes with concentration on work.

If the food is not agreeable, we cannot eat the quantity needed. So, this is also an essential requisite for a *sāttvika* person. A *sāttvika* person should therefore fulfil the above requirements from what he eats. By keeping his mind pure, he can gain spiritual strength for meditation on the Lord.

We develop food habits from childhood. Our tongue can be our friend or our enemy. We should develop good eating habits from childhood. What we eat every time has to be analysed properly.

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।
आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥९॥

***kaṭvamla-lavaṇātyuṣṇa-tīkṣṇa-rūkṣa-vidāhinaḥ* |**
***āhārā rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkha-śokāmayapradāḥ* ||9||**

Foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning are liked by the rājasika. *They produce pain, sorrow and disease.*

kaṭu: Bitter.
amala: Sour.
atyuṣṇa: Excessively hot.
tīkṣṇa: Pungent.
rūkṣa: Dry.
vidāhinaḥ: Burning.

The active, passionate type of men eat foods that have a strong flavour and taste. They enjoy foods that have a salty taste and are spicy. They put lots of salt on their chips and vegetables. They like extra hot pickles. They keep on saying "oh, it's not", but still eat and enjoy eating such foods.

These do give a sense of enjoyment on eating. One feels happy on eating such food. One should feel contentment on eating food. Happiness should not be the criteria. Happiness brings sorrow with it. People suffer diseases like peptic ulcer, hypertension, constipation etc. One disease leads to another. By the time they realise their mistakes they find it hard to break the habit. The doctors advise them a special diet but they cannot follow it. They feel they are missing a pleasure in life. They suffer sorrow and pain for not being able to eat what they want and also on account of the disease they have developed.

Āmaya means disease *Rājasika* food brings disease (*āmaya-pradaḥ*). When one is ill, his *sādhanā* is disturbed. For those who want to start their spiritual *sādhanā* in middle and old age, *rājasika* food, with the diseases it brings, does not give a chance to start *sādhanā*. They are worried about their health and go to doctors and spend a lot of money to get cured. They go to temples and pray to God to cure them. They become restless. The end-result will be their inablility to attain liberation.

Discipline in food is therefore a must for all of us and our children.

> यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत्
> उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥१०॥
> ***yātayāmaṁ gatarasaṁ pūti paryuṣitaṁ ca yat* |**
> ***ucchiṣṭam api cāmedhyaṁ bhojanaṁ tāmasapriyam* ||10||**
>
> *That which is stale, tasteless, putrid and rotten and impure, is the food liked by the* tāmasika.

yātayāmam: Stale food, badly cooked food
gatarasam: Dried, tasteless.
pūti: Putrified
paryuṣitam: Rotten food kept overnight.
ucchiṣṭam api: Remnants after being eaten by others.
amedhyam: Not pure.

This was written 5000 years ago, when they did not have storage facilities as what we have nowadays. But these principles do apply for present-day foods also. Are we not seeing outbreaks of food poisoning? Are we not bombarded by health officials telling us how to cook and store food? Is it not better to make fresh food everyday and eat? No medical expert can disagree on this advice.

Yātayāmam: It means stale food. In the olden days, where they did not have clocks, a day was divided into 8 portions of 3 hours each. Each 3 hour period was called a *yāma*. Accordingly, the food cooked more than a *yāma* ago is supposed to be stale. Any food, freshly cooked really speaking should not be eaten after 3 hours. (One has to put an arbitrary period that is safe and reasonable). Fresh food eaten within a *yāma* is also tasty and one can enjoy it better.

Gatarasam: It means tasteless food. Food kept for a long time will be tasteless. To make it tasty, one adds more salt, pepper or sugar as the case may be.

Pūti: It means foul-smelling. Sea-foods like prawns, lobsters are really foul-smelling but we train ourselves to enjoy them.

Paryuṣitam: (Stale food). Foods kept for longer periods or overnight are considered as stale. Though we keep food in the fridge overnight, it is really not good to eat. We do not know what bacteria have entered such food. Drinks kept for months and years, that get fermented into alcoholic beverages also fall into this category.

Ucchiṣṭam: Food left over should not be eaten. We see people eating from the same plate where somebody else has eaten and left some food. It is not a healthy habit.

Amedhyam: This means impure food. Food, when cooked has to be offered to the Lord (symbolic gesture) first. Really speaking, some food should be kept aside after cooking, offered to the idol of the God in the house and shared by all in the family. Also, some food should be offered to any person or animal who comes to the door for food. If not, such food, according to the *śāstra*s, becomes impure. This law is brought on to develop universal love and sharing what one has.

One should climb the spiritual ladder by moving from *tāmasika* to *rājasika* food habits and from *rājasika* to *sāttvika* food habits. One should bring up children on *sāttvika* food habits.

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते ।
यष्टव्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्त्विकः ॥११॥

aphalākāṅkṣibhir yajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijyate |
yaṣṭavyam eveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ ||11||

That sacrifice which is offered by men desiring no fruit, and as enjoined by the śāstras, *with their mind fixed on the* yajña *only for its sake, is* "sāttvika".

yasṭayam: Ought to be offered.
samādhāya: Having decided.
vidhidṛṣṭaḥ: Enjoined by the *śāstra*s.
ijyate: Offered.

The Lord has now taken the topic of *yajña* (i.e., sacrifices) and classifies them into three types again. We have discussed in detail in chapter 3 and 4 about *yajña*s.

Yajña in the olden days had a particular meaning. People undertook some major task, performed rituals wherein they offered oblations to the fire, invoked the deity of their particular choice and shared the result obtained with all. The performer of the *yajña* was expected to sacrifice his animal instincts in the sacred fire. This was a method of purifying one's mind.

In course of time, this changed and people started sacrificing animals. The Lord never said that he would be happy to have an animal killed to please him. He certainly would be happy if people killed their animal instincts and became pure.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given a new meaning to the word *yajña*. He considers any action undertaken as *yajña*. It is these actions undertaken, that are classified into the three types. What sort of activities are undertaken by men of *sāttvika* temperament?

(1) **Vidhidṛṣṭa**: The actions have to be undertaken which are according to the *śāstra*s. The Lord keeps on insisting on the *śāstra*s as the sole and final authority. What do the *śāstra*s say? The *śāstra*s broadly categorise actions into four types:

(a) *Nitya karma*: Daily duties to be undertaken.
(b) *Naimittika karma*: Actions that must be diligently pursued for a specially intended purpose. They should not be avoided.
(c) *Kāmya karma*: Desire-ridden actions.
(d) *Niṣiddha karma*: Forbidden actions.

Sāttvika persons follow the rules strictly. Before undertaking any task, the person analyses it first. He gives a deep consideration to what has to be done, depending on the time, place and circumstances.

(2) **Aphalākāṅkṣibhiḥ**: (Desiring no fruits). *Sāttvika* people do not look for fruits of action. They perform *niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga*. They concentrate on what has to be done and they do it diligently. They know that fruits come of their own accord depending on their work. They do not even

expect the fruits of their efforts. They take it as they come. If they get good results, they consider it as from the Lord, and share it with others. They say *kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu*. If they get bad results, they do not blame the Lord. They accept responsibility for things that go wrong.

(3) **Manaḥ samāhāya**: This is a very important requisite. The mind has to be fixed on the action. It means that one should consider the pros and cons of any action to be taken (before undertaking such actions). Having decided, one should fix his mind and efforts on it. We can give a number of examples from our daily actions. We can easily say that a number of actions we undertake are half-hearted attempts. Many of our major actions are always with a desire to obtain a particular benefit. We therefore fail to concentrate on the present action and consequently we do not get satisfactory results.

Sāttvika people undertake actions in the spirit ''it is our duty to work''. They have a motive force, not in getting the result but in thinking that ''it is the duty''.

अभिसन्धाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यत् ।
इज्यते भरतश्रेष्ठ तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसम् ॥१२॥

***abhisandhāya tu phalaṁ dambhārtham api caiva yat* |**
***ijyate bharataśreṣṭha taṁ yajñaṁ viddhi rājasam* ||12||**

O best of Bharatas, the sacrifice which is performed with desire for fruit, and only for the sake of ostentation, know that to be rājasika.

phalam abhisandhāya: Seeking for fruits of action.

Rājasika people do not follow the *śāstras* because: (a) they have not understood it, or (b) they have misunderstood it, or (c) they do not care to know them in the first instance. Accordingly their actions are *kāmya karmas*. They are desirous of obtaining a particular result from any work they undertake. It is clear that they lose their concentration on the job on hand.

A student will get the best results if he concentrates on the day-to-day lessons. Automatically, at the time of exams he finds it very easy to write the answers. Any work we undertake, must be like this.

There are people who want to satisfy their vanity before the community at large. They want to display their superiority in wealth or knowledge for others to realise and praise them. They are desirous of getting name and fame in society. The work will therefore lose its real purpose. Such actions and sacrifices cannot be termed divine. Giving away thousands of pounds to get publicity and acclaim and a reward of material benefit from such charity is *rājasika*.

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणम् ।
श्रद्धाविरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ॥१३॥

vidhihīnam asṛṣṭānnaṁ mantrahīnam adakṣiṇam |
śraddhāvirahitaṁ yajñaṁ tāmasaṁ paricakṣate ||13||

Yajña *performed contrary to the* śāstras, *in which no food is distributed, no* mantras *are recited, no gifts given, which is devoid of faith, is considered as* tāmasika.

asṛṣṭānnam: Without distribution of food.
adakṣiṇam: Without gifts.

Those, who perform *niṣiddha karma* are considered *tāmasika*. Murder, rape, stealing others' property, unlawfully obtaining objects, etc. come under this category. This is called *vidhihīnam*.

Asṛṣṭānnam: Distribution of food is advised by the *śāstras*. Here the term food includes the basic necessities of life i.e., food, shelter, clothing. This is the spirit of universal brotherhood. Did we not share all these three with our brothers and sisters in our younger days? We should care for fellow beings and animals. What we have must be shared with others and it is a very important divine quality.

Our *śāstras* have included several holy days in our calendar just to remind us of sharing what we have, with others on those days. They advocate feeding poor people at the temple on auspicious days. Of course they look forward and expect such duties to be undertaken daily. They say that everyday in your life should be a holy day.

Mantrahīnam: *Mantra*s are sacred prayers recited during worship. *Mantra*s have a divine meaing. Understanding the divine meaning while reciting the *mantra*s is necessary. While giving alms to the needy, one should say *hari-oṁ tat-sat* (God, thou art that) or *kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu*. Giving alms grudgingly or with a muttered curse is *tāmasika*.

Adakṣiṇam: *Dakṣiṇā* is gift given to a learned person. The priest who performs the rituals is a learned man. He has spent all his time in learning the *śāstra*s. It is his livelihood. He is supposed to be given due reward as *dakṣiṇā* by us. If we give a few pence for namesake, it is not *dakṣiṇā*. One should give what one can afford whole-heartedly and piously. Not giving or giving it grudgingly is *adakṣiṇa* and is a *tāmasika* quality.

Śraddhāvirahitam: When there is no faith in what one does, it becomes *tāmasika* in quality. All works undertaken must have faith (faith in somebody higher). Faith in divinity will increase one's capacity to put forth the best efforts in his work. If work is undertaken with pride and a sense of ego, it is *tāmasika*. Who are we after all? What we have is His. He has given us what we have. We must realise His presence in all. Faith in Him would get us His blessings in all our actions.

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ॥१४॥

devadvijaguruprājña-pūjanaṁ śaucam ārjavam |
brahmacaryam ahiṁsā ca śārīraṁ tapa ucyate ||14||

Worship of the devas*, the twice-born, the* gurus *and the wise; purity, straight-forwardness, celibacy, non-injury; these are considered "the austerity of the body".*

dvija: The twice-born.
prājña: The wise.
ārjavam: Freedom from crookedness.

The Lord now takes up discussion of the three types of *tapas* (austerity). In the 14th verse He describes *tapas* at body level, in the 15th verse, the *tapas* at the level of speech and the 16th, *tapas* at mental level. As *tapas* is a method of purifying oneself, the purity must be at all the three levels—body, speech and mind. These three verses are extremely beautiful and are a must for any *sādhaka*. Why do we have to do *tapas*? What is the benefit from *tapas*? In spiritual life, one attemps to attain the knowledge of *Brahman* and eventually will attain the status of *Brahman*.

First of all for this, one must accept the presence of the soul imprisoned as it were in the body. One should accept that the Soul, because of the body, has contact with world of objects and forgets its true nature. It starts identifying itself with mind/body. It is then called ego. Ego tries to stop it from going back to the original state of the pure *Brahman*. *Tapas* or austerity is a method of purifying the ego and giving it back the original status of the Pure Self.

In this verse cleaning the impurity at body level is described.

(I) **Deva-dvija-guru-prājña-pūjanam**: Worship of the *deva*s, the twice-born, the *guru*s and the wise, is the first step in purifying the body. What is worship? One cannot give a simple clear definition of this word. It needs some prerequisites. Worship needs accepting something higher than oneself. Worship needs love or devotion to such higher object. Worship needs a desire to develop the qualities of the higher in oneself.

By putting them together, one can say worship is tuning oneself with devotion to something higher with a desire of developing such higher qualities in oneself. Worship can be for possession of material objects for one's sensual enjoyment. One therefore is said to worship or adore some other person who is rich, beautiful, powerful, etc. We hear the declaration of fond lovers saying, ''I adore you and worship you with all my heart, would you marry me?'' We come across people who surround rich and powerful men and act as their 'yes-men'. Among them there will be some who would want to attain that high status themselves.

This worship is egotistic, it is not true worship. Worship, in the spiritual sense, is realising the ego, trying to see divine qualities in others, worshipping those with higher divine qualities. The aim should be to develop the twenty-six divine qualities, (chapter 16, verses 1, 2 and 3) and drop the ego.

Who are the ones to be worshipped?

(1) **Devas**: Religious books and elders have given us the names and forms of different deities. It is up to each one of us to worship anyone of the innumerable *deva*s. We should realise their divine qualities and try to love them and unite with them. Union comes by getting all the twentysix divine qualities they have.

Hindu religion has given different names and forms to *Brahman*, the Supreme. It is only to give each man a choice to develop his love of that deity. By giving stories (mythological), our *ṛsis* have given us an easy method. If we like the story, we begin to love it. We develop devotion and this helps us in worship. Worship of *deva*s can be of any *deva* or *deva*s.

(2) **Dvija**: *Dvija* means twice-born. We are all born from the womb of our mothers. We have come out of the layer of amnion of the womb. The covering of the womb kept us in darkness from the outer world. We have come, as a result of birth (and this is our first birth), into the world of matter. Our contact and identification with the world makes us ignorant. This is due to *māyā* (due to our *vāsanā*s). If we can come out of the layer of *māyā* it is our second birth. We enter into the world of knowledge.

Brāhmaṇas are considerd as *dvija*s. They are supposed to have acquired spiritual knowledge and realised the Self. Respecting brāhmaṇas really means respecting those who have acquired the knowledge of *Brahman*.

(3) **Guru**: *Guru* means teacher. A teacher is one who has acquired knowledge of a subject and is fit to teach others who have not acquired such knowledge. A student is expected to acqire the knowledge which the *guru* has and in turn become a *guru* by passing on that knowledge to others.

In the world of objects, we have teachers on different aspects in wordly matters and it is up to us to take any subject we like. In spiritual science, *guru* is one who has acquired the knowledge of *Brahman*. In short, we must respect our teachers who impart knowledge to us.

(4) **Prājña**: *Prājña* means knowledge. *Prājña* is one who has acquired knowledge. Our *Upaniṣad*s declare that *Brahman* is knowledge (*prajñānaṁ brahma*). One need not have to be a teacher or brāhmaṇa. Anyone who has knowledge of *Brahman* has to be respected. *Mahātmās*, *jīvanmukta*s have to be worshipped.

(5) **Śaucam**: Cleanliness is another aspect of purifying the body. As the body consists of the physical body and the mind, and, as the body has to stay in this world amongst objects, purity has to be (1) physical, (2) mental and (3) of the surroundings. We should keep our surroundings clean, we should keep ourselves clean and we should keep our thoughts clean.

(6) **Ārjavam** (Straight-forwardness): As we are made up of the Soul inside with intellect, mind and body, our actions and thoughts should all be coordinated. There should be harmony between what we do and what we think and what we speak. This is termed *trikaraṇa śuddhi*. This is the pathway to the truth and truth is the gateway to *brahma-jñāna*.

(7) **Brahmacaryam**: *Brahmacarya* is celibacy. Celibacy in thought, word and deed is *tapas* of the highest level. We should not develop attachment to worldly objects through our sense-organs. We should not live for pleasures of the body. Any pleasure obtained from wordly objects is an obstacle for *brahmacarya*. A celibate is one who has no liking or desire for pleasure from the external world. He does not view objects at body level (*deha-ṛṣṭi*) but he looks at them at intellectual level (*citta-dṛṣṭi*).

Our intellect has to help our mind to constantly think on *Brahman*. Constant thinking of *Brahman* is *brahmacarya* (*brahmani carati* is *brahmacārī*). *Brahmacarya* is total mental discipline.

(8) **Ahiṁsā**: *Hiṁsā* is cruelty. *Ahiṁsā* is non-injury. We must know who is the one to be injured. Is it our physical body?

Spiritually speaking, we are not the body but the Soul. We should not injure (*karṣaya*) the Lord who dwells inside us (*karṣayanti bhūtagrāmaṁ mama dehe*, the Lord has said already). We should not injure others including animals. We will be injuring the Lord who dwells in all. We injure ourselves by our ignorance of the truth. *Ahiṁsā* is not just physical but also mental; we should not hurt each other mentally. We should not hurt the Lord in our body by impure thoughts at mental level.

Injury in certain situations is not *hiṁsā.* Surgical procedure to cure illness is not *hiṁsā.* Austerity or *tapas* at body level has therefore been given a new meaning by the Lord. Physical cruelty to our bodies by brutal self-denials is not *tapas*. *Tapas* conserves our energy which can be diverted to meditate on the Lord.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च तत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥१५॥

anudvegakaraṁ vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitaṁ ca yat |
svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vāṅmayaṁ tapa ucyate ||15||

Speech which does not excite others, which is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, and practice of the study of the Vedas *and scriptures. These are called* 'tapas *of speech'*.

This verse must be properly understood and practised by all at every moment of their wakeful state.

Speech is an essential requisite of social life. It is a strong means of communication between people. It is a very powerful weapon we all have. Our speech reflects our intellectual calibre and our mental discipline. It also shows our capacity for physical control. Our speech is one channel in which without our knowledge we spend our energy. After a long speech one gets tired. If we wish to use our energy to meditate on the Lord, we must not waste energy on unnecessry talks.

The Lord, therefore, has given four important principles of speech:

(a) **Anudvegakaraṁ**: By our speech there should not be disturbance in others. The disturbance can happen either by irritating others or by exciting others (obscene talk). It should not trouble or injure others. What we have said cannot be retrieved. The harm done in a moment of uncontrolled talk can break a marriage or kill a person. It can ruin one's career. Our speech should be gentle and peaceful.

(b) **Satyam**: Speech should be truthful.

(c) **Priyam**: Speech which is truthful should also be agreeable. If it is going to be disagreeable, it is better not to speak. Even when we disagree we should not be disagreeable. One should decide what to speak, when to speak and how to speak. The majority of people are not spiritually advanced. They all live for their personal happiness. One should not tell the truth if he considers that the other person does not agree with it. It does not, however, mean that one should lie.

(d) **Hitam**: It should be beneficial to the other person. In certain situations, witholding the truth is beneficial. We can see examples in medical and legal professions. Once upon a time, there was an ascetic sitting near a tree. He saw someone running away and hiding near his hermitage. A few moments later, four people came running and approaching the ascetic asked if he had seen a person running away. The ascetic does not know the situation. It could have been thugs chasing a good person. By telling the truth, he would cause harm to the person. In such situations, it is not a sin to withhold the truth. The ascetic remained silent and did not answer them.

By following this four-way test on one's speech, one can conserve one's energy. What should the energy be used for?

Svādhyāyābhyasanam: (Regular study of the scriptures). The Lord insists that all of us should study scriptures regularly. There is no bar of sex, caste or religion. Anybody can read the *śāstra*s. Nay, all must read it daily. Study of the *śāstra*s on a regular basis, gives one better knowledge and understaning. In course of time one can understand the *śāstra*s better. One should reflect on what the *śāstra*s say and why they say it. This, of course, helps in better speech.

Another meaning for *svādhyāya* is, one must understand and reflect upon one's own Self. *Sva* is Self and *adhyāya* is study. One must always analyse who he really is?

मनःप्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥१६॥

***manaḥprasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ* |**
***bhāvasaṁśuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam ucyate* ||16||**

Keeping the mind serene, a pleasing facial expression, silence, self-control, purity of mind; these are called mānasika tapas *or austerity of the mind.*

manaḥprasādaḥ: Serenity of mind.
saumyatvam: Pleasing expression.
vinigraha: Self-control.
bhāvasaṁśuddhi: Purity of mind.

Five qualities that constitute *tapas* of the mind are mentioned in this verse.

Manaḥ-prasādaḥ: (Serenity of mind). Mind, as we know, is a store-house of desires and thoughts. It is connected to the objective world through the sense-organs. Sense-organs constantly bombard it with stimuli which are pleasing or non-pleasing. Depending on that, the mind wants it or does not want it or hates it or is frightened of it.

The aim of the individual is to realise who he really is and contemplate on the divine *ātmā* in him. To achieve this, his mind has to be calm, quiet and clear. An agitated mind cannot concentrate on the Self. The place around the lake is so calm and peaceful. There are no disturbances of any kind. The mind should be as serene as the atmosphere near the lake. A *sāttvika* person can keep the mind calm. He is not disturbed by the objects around him. His mind does not dwell on the past but lives in its own world.

Tapas of the mind cannot be achieved if the mind is not quiet. By having an ideal aim in life, which is divine, one can then by practice achieve this state of *manaḥ-prasāda*. All desires and thought-processes have to be wiped out to make room for only one aim in life and that aim is to achieve *brahma-jñāna*.

Saumyatvam: It means kindness. When we do not like something, that immediately is reflected in our facial expression. When we really crave for something it also is shown by our facial expression. In other words, face is the index of the mind. Whatever agitates the mind, is noticeable by others owing to our facial expressions. Anger, hatred, fear, greed can all be seen in the face.

When there are no disturbances in the mind either from without or within, the face immediately registers a glow of brightness. This clear, serene, peaceful state of the mind gives a warm feeling of affection for all around. This feeling is *saumyatvam* (kindness). The person, who has achieved this state, sees divinity in all and automatically has a pleasing expression. When one sees a nice thing and does not get a craving to get it, he shows a pleasant expression on his face. The expression changes as soon as he personally gets a desire to have it. The feeling one gets on entering a park with flowers in bloom, where he gets total relaxation and can appreciate nature's beauty can be compared to the facial expression in a state of *saumyatva*.

Maunam: The Lord is talking about the mind in this verse. So in this context it is a state of silence of the mind. This state can be achieved when no disturbances arise in one's mind. This is possible when one develops a sense of detachment (*vairāgya*). Unfortunately the mind, being a store-house, can open its own door and live in it. In such situations, disturbances arise internally. *Tapas* of the mind includes *maunam*. One has to acquire it by practice.

Muni is a person who contemplates on the *ātmā* constantly. He achieves that state by practising *maunam*. He has kept the searchlight of his intellect focused constantly on the 'Self' inside him. All his thoughts are divine and all he sees is divine.

Ātmavinigraha: This means self-control. *Ātmā* in this context means the deluded *ātmā* i.e., the ego. One has to control his ego. One has actually to stamp the ego out of existence. For this, one should control the mind and senses. He should be like a driver controlling the vehicle. The driver, unless he controls the steering wheel and uses the brakes as needed, cannot reach his destination. The passenger on a chariot has to have a charioteer to control the horses. That charioteer, if divine, (Lord Kṛṣṇa) will control the wild horses (mind). (Restraint of the *sāttvika* type.) The animal in us always wants to run amok. It is our inherent nature. Due to our *vāsanā*s, the animal instinct gets inside us. We have to perform *yajña*s and sacrifice the animal instinct. Animal instinct is our lower nature and divine instinct is our higher nature. We have to realise what we want to satisfy. Do we want to satisfy the lower or higher instinct? If we want *mokṣa*, we should control (*vinigraha*) our lower instinct. We should change our nature to achieve this aim, we must give control of our mind to the Lord (picture of *Gītopadeśa* scene).

Bhāvasaṁśuddhi: This means honesty of motive. Our thoughts and feelings have to be pure. Our mind should be like a mirror without a speck of dust on it. We should wipe out all impurities in us. This is possible only by *niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga*. Outward show of *tapas* while mind is contemplating on worldly thoughts is *mithyācāra*. One should be *sadācāra sampanna* (one should have constant divine thoughts reflecting in divine actions).

In our pilgrimage to reach the 'Truth', we must have a definite aim to reach it. We must get on the road to it. We must avoid narrow paths and lanes with pits and pot-holes in them. In other words, it should be like a motorway. We must constantly let the divine in us control our journey and overcome any animal tendencies in us, which might divert us from the goal. The test of true success in life is to achieve this state of perfection, i.e., constant divine expressions.

True *tapas* includes the meaning implied in verses 14, 15 and 16. One should perform austerities which involve attaining the qualities mentioned herein.

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्त्रिविधं नरैः ।
अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥१७॥

śraddhayā parayā taptaṁ tapas tat trividhaṁ naraiḥ |
aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktaiḥ sāttvikaṁ paricakṣate ||17||

This three-fold austerity performed by men desiring no fruits, with utmost faith and with single-minded devotion is declared to be sāttvika.

yuktaḥ: Single-minded.
parayā: Highest.
taptam: Practised.
paricakṣate: Declared.

After describing what real *tapas* is aimed at, i.e., to achieve *mokṣa*, the Lord explains as to what is the meaning of *sāttvika tapas*. The Lord has given three requisites needed to perform *tapas* at the levels of body, mind and speech as described before.

(1) **Śraddhayā**: Faith is extremely important in any field of activity. Faith can help achieve the highest ambitions in life. What other higher ambition should one have than knowing and realising one's own true nature? Once the faith in the Supreme is fixed, one does not care as to what happens to the physical body and the surroundings. We aim at the highest and fix our mind on it, we should not let any obstacles hinder us in our journey. One should not worry about failures, one must get up and carry on again. Faith in the Lord helps to achieve this. The Lord says *parayā śraddhayā* which means supreme faith.

(2) To achieve this, one has to be a *yuktaḥ*. If one unites himself with his thoughts, one will make good progress in achieving the result. If we think of one thing but do something else, we cannot get what we want. If we think of the Lord, if we want to unite with the Lord, all our actions have to be divine. Thinking of divine and acting divine is *yuktaḥ*.

(3) The Lord also says *naraiḥ*. *Naraiḥ* means men. It includes all human beings. It is we, humans, who can have *śraddhā*, and be *yukta* because we have intellect. We should use our conscience always. We should let divinity control all our thoughts, and all our actions have to be divine.

If we want to go to London from say, Scotland, our aim should be to reach London and all our thought should be on the road to London. We must face and avoid dangers on the road. We must drive past obstacles, road repairs, etc. We must avoid pedestrians and other traffic on our path. We must face adverse weather conditions. We must see that our car is in a fit state to undertake the journey and that it has enough petrol. Thinking of reaching London and not looking at the 'fuel gauge', we may suddenly come to a halt when there is no more fuel left.

So, doing present *karma* properly and keeping the goal in mind, is the correct way.

By contemplating on *Paramātmā,* one should look at the present and kill existing *vāsanā*s (perform *niṣkāma karma*). One should not acquire new desires (*vāsanā*s) apart from the sole desire to achieve *mokṣa* and do *karma-phala-tyāga*. In the final stages one should stop even contemplating on *mokṣa*. It will come automatically, why think about it? Thinking always lands one in a dreamland. Let us not go into dreamland, let us dwell in the present. The future will come in its own time. Let the future come as present at a later stage and let us see it when it comes as a reality.

If one fulfils these three conditions and acts, performing *tapas* of mind, speech and body, he will attain *mokṣa*.

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत् ।
क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवम् ।।१८।।

satkāra-māna-pūjārthaṁ tapo dambhena caiva yat |
kriyate tadiha proktaṁ rājasaṁ calamadhruvam ||18||

That austerity which is practised with hypocrisy, with the object of gaining reputation and earning fame is said to be rājasika. *It is unstable and transitory.*

calam: Unstable.
adhruvam: Transitory.
satkāra-māna-pūjārtham: With the object of gaining name, fame and reverence.

Men of *rājasika* type are those who perform their *tapas* only for getting honour, reputation and respect. They want others to see what good they are doing. Look at Mother Teresa. Did she do the work because she wanted the world to recognise and honour her? She did not care how others judged her. She wanted to do her charitable divine work.

If one really wants to achieve *mokṣa*, one should be true to oneself. What is the point in *dambha* (pretence) and cheating oneself? You want to achieve *mokṣa* and you should not expect others to realise that you want to achieve *mokṣa*. The divine qualities expressed have to be honest. If one wants to achieve reputation or get reverence from others, it has to come automatically from others. One should not expect others to honour him for his divine work.

Such intentions, sooner or later, will burst out. One cannot persevere with such qualities for long. As soon as a particular desire is achieved, the effort fails. One will lose what one has got. People will find out his true colours sooner or later. Why people, the very Lord who is inside as the eternal witness will know exactly what the *dambhācārī*'s motives are. That fellow will not attain *brahma-jñāna*. The Lord says it is *adhruvam* (transitory) and *calam* (unstable). *Sāttvika tapas*, on the other hand, is *dhruvam* and *acalam*.

Dhruva denotes the pole star. It is fixed in its position in the sky as a star. It has been used by mariners for navigation. During prayers in Hindu marriages, the name of *Dhruva* is recited to symbolise the constancy in the marriage. Let the marriage bond be permanent, it means. *Dhruva* is called as *grahādhāra* in Hindu mythology.

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीडया क्रियते तपः ।
परस्योत्सादनार्थं वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥१९॥

***mūḍhagrāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ* ।**
***parasyotsādanārthaṁ vā tat tāmasam udāhṛtam* ॥19॥**

That tapas *which is practised with a foolish notion, with self-torture, for the purpose of destroying others, is said to be* tāmasika.

mūḍhagrāheṇa: Out of foolish resolution.
pīḍayā: Torture.
utsādanārtham: For destruction.

The Lord has given three practices which are of a *tāmasika* nature.

(1) **Mūḍhagrāheṇa**: (Foolish resolution). Resolution is determination. It is like taking a vow. Resolutions have to be undertaken after serious consideration of their consequences. A properly thought-out resolution according to the *śāstras* is a good resolution. One has to be mature enough to undertake a resolution. To be mature one must have an insight into what is Self, what is non-Self? One must have learnt of them from elders, *gurus* and books. Hasty decisions, as we know, end in danger to oneself or others. "I am going to become a *saṁnyāsī*. I will leave the house tomorrow and go to Kāśī"; suppose one takes such a decision. He has lived a family life so far and had mutual co-existence. He had a shelter and he was used to a way of life. Has he got enough money to reach Kāśī? Has he got a shelter there? Can he live with others in a rest-house where the set up is different? Where will he get his food? While he is organising all these, he would have to face a number of problems. What has he gone to Kāśī for? After a few months, he may not have enough energy to sustain himself physically or mentally. His *vāsanās* will bring him back to his original state. He either comes back or gets depressed, and depression brings its own problems.

What is it that Arjuna wanted to do? He wanted to drop his Gāṇḍīva and become a *saṁnyāsī*. It would have been a foolish resolution taken out of ignorance. It would have been a *tāmasika* action. By deciding to go to Kāśī, (if we continue on this theme), the person would have left his family which was dependent on him, in the lurch. What would happen to them? One cannot shirk one's responsibilities. This will injure others. Instead of achieving *mokṣa*, one would incur more sin.

(2) By foolish resolutions, one would actually torture one's Self only. The Lord says "*ātmanaḥ piḍayā*" (with self-torture), by physically putting oneself to torture, one is not gaining any-

thing. His mind will not be calm and peaceful and would not be conducive to meditation on the Self.

(3) **Parasyotsādanārtham**: One should never undertake resolutions for injuring others. God is present in all beings. One has no right to injure others. It is a sinful act. One has no right to judge others. One should be the judge of one's own actions. The judiciary system does not fall in this category. Judges pass sentences to punish the criminals. In such cases, it is not Mr. A or Mr. B, who passed the sentence. It is the judge who wore the judicial robes and who sat at a particular place and passed the sentence. He is a public servant and has been authorised by the public to punish criminals.

One has no right to destroy and torture one's own family by one's actions. One has no right to destroy or injure one's own physical body. One has no right to destroy or injure others. Any resolution of *tapas* ending in any of the above three is *tāmasika*. It is prohibited by the *śāstra*s.

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ।।२०।।

dātavyam iti yad dānaṁ dīyate'nupakāriṇe |
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānaṁ sāttvikaṁ smṛtam ||20||

The charity which is given, knowing it to be a duty, in proper time and place, to a deserving person from whom one expects nothing in return, is declared to be sāttvika.

dātavyam: Ought to be given.
pātre: Deserving person.
anupakārin: Who can do no good in return.

The Lord now takes up the theme of charities. Charity also is a form of *tapas*. It is anausterity which needs practice. One must know what charity means. One must know why charity is to be given. For this, one should have some spiritual knowledge and should have had advice from *guru*s and sacred books on *śāstras*.

We all live in the universe. We all live a life of mutual co-existence. We have a duty towards society. We have a moral duty to consider society as one unit and we are like different parts of one single body. Some of us have more than what others have of certain things. We may be wealthy, we may be scholars, we may be strong, etc. We may have some high position in society. We have a duty to share them all with others who are less fortunate than we are.

Society has children who cannot look after themselves and need education as well. It has disabled people, poor people, weak people, or sick people. Charity is sharing what one has, with others who need it.

The first rule to know is that it is a sacred duty to offer charity (*dātavyam iti*). After all, the act will help us by purifying us. It must be a whole-hearted act of giving. ''I am losing something by giving away'' should not be the attitude. ''I am being blessed by the Lord from this act'' should be the attitude. I should not feel that I am supporting the poor by my act as a wealthy person. After all, what have I got compared to what the Lord has got! The Lord really has made me only an agent to share with others. I have been blessed by the Lord with a certain capacity which has made me a wealthy person. I will use it for 'Lord's purpose' is a *sāttvika* attitude and the act is *sāttvika tapas*.

The *śāstra*s do indicate the proper place and time to give gifts. Temples are situated all over India, in every street, in every town. They are developed as places of religious worship by the community. We are expected to visit these places near our house and not only to have *darśana* of the Lord inside the temple but also to see the Lord in such needy people as are there and to offer charity.

The Lord uses the word *deśe* to remind us of the right place. Even in one's house, one has to have a proper place in front of the house to offer the food. One should not throw food at others standing near the door.

Pātre: Charity should be given to deserving persons. The recipient should be lift and worthy to receive it. This does not mean that we should judge the person at our doors who asks for help. A hungry person at the door is the fittest person. One cannot see a person's hunger outwardly. Also, the person at the door may be collecting for another sick member of his family whom he cannot look after.

Kāle: *Śāstra*s do give indication of time to offer charity. Occasions like marriages, birthdays, passing one's exams etc. are occasions to celebrate by helping the needy. One should offer charity especially on the anniversary days of one's own elders who have passed away.

Anupakāriṇe: One should not expect any material benefit in return for charity. One should not expect honour and fame by charitable actions. By giving charity one should expect nothing but the Lord's blessings, which of course comes automatically.

Announcing in the papers of one's charitable acts is pretension (*dambha*). Of course it is our duty to see that the gift reaches deserving members in the community. In politics, we come across rich people giving large sums of money to a charity fund, run by a person in a higher position. It is given with a motive that the person in the higher position notices it and does him a favour in return. (Also, it is possible that the money in the charity fund may not go to the right people).

यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः।
दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम् ।।२१।।

***yat tu pratyupakārārthaṁ phalam uddiśya vā punaḥ* |**
***dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṁ tad dānaṁ rājasaṁ smṛtam* ||21||**

That gift which is given with a view to receiving some benefit in return, or looking for fruits (benefits) therefrom or given reluctantly, is said to be rājasika.

pratyupakārārtham: Expecting some benefit in return.
parikliṣṭam: Reluctantly.
dīyate: Is given.

The *rājasika* type of gifts are not charitable gifts at all. They have a commercial motive behind such actions. A businessman always sells an item for profit. That is for livelihood and it becomes his nature. In the *Gītā*, we are talking of spiritual progress to achieve liberation for ourselves. We have to think pure and act pure.

When a gift is given expecting some return benefit, it loses its charitable status. Charity (*dāna*) is given without expecting any material benefit. (Really speaking it should not even be given hoping to attain liberation). This is *pratyupakārārthm* gift. Gifts should also not be given in the name of charity, expecing return benefits at a later date, time and place. These gifts are social celebrations only.

There are some people who give something in charity but not with true compassion and love. It is given reluctantly (*parikliṣṭam*). They begrudge what is being given. They give it because they are forced by somebody else to do so. They feel sorry that they are losing something by giving in charity.

Most of our day-to-day gifts in our daily activities are of *rājasika* type. *Dāna* should be given with a sense of duty. ''My position today is due to God's blessing and let me share that blessin with those less fortunate than me", should be the spirit in giving charity.

There are big temples in India which conduct many charitable activities like running schools, colleges, hospitals, etc. Monies, land, etc. given to the Lord at the temple will be used to run these charities. Thousands of people benefit from these institutions. We should be generous in giving what we have, to those institutions. We can do it only if we develop universal love. If we develop love for ourselves, our actions will automatically become selfish (they are *rājasika*).

अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते ।
असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ।।२२।।
adeśakāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate |
asatkṛtam avajñātaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ||22||

Charity that is given at the wrong place and time, to un-

worthy persons, without respect and given insultingly is said to be tāmasika.

adeśakāle: Improper places.
apātrebhyaḥ: Unworthy people.
asatkṛtam: Without respect.
avajñātam: Insulting.

One has to respect fellow human beings, whether they are rich or poor. On several occasions in the past, we have seen (and we have done also) people going in vehicles throwing coins at beggars and at the same time insulting them with cruel words. That is why, to train us, our *śāstra*s say that we should give alms at temples and other sacred places. Normally, when we go to the temple, we show more *sāttvika* temperament. The sight of the God's idol and the serenity of the atmosphere somehow bring out the goodness inside us. We also consider it as our duty to give some alms to the poor and disabled. This habit, in course of time, can be continued at other places. (Of course, nowadays, even going to the temples is not with the same spirit. Many of us do not find time to go the temples. If we go, we are always in a hurry to come out because of other commitments.)

Similarly, when we celebrate marriages, we are (supposed to be) in a happier frame of mind and we do not feel bad (to a certain extent only) giving alms to the poor.

Tāmasika people usually give gifts to unworthy people and consider it as charity. Or, if they give some money or food to the needy, they usually throw it at them and utter insulting words. As there is no faith in such actions it becomes *aśraddhaya hutaṁ dattam* (chapter 17, verse 28. It is described at the end of this chapter).

ओं तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ।।२३।।
***oṁ tat sad iti nirdeśo brahmaṇas trividhaḥ smṛtaḥ* |**
***brāhmaṇās tena vedāś ca yajñāś ca vihitāḥ purā* ||23||**

> Om Tat Sat. *This has been declared the triple designation of* Brahman. *By that brāhmaṇas,* Vedas *and* yajñas *were created formerly.*

trividhaḥ: Three-fold.
nirdeśaḥ: Names and designations.
vihitāḥ: Created.

Oṁ Tat Sat is the most sacred *mantra* for all the Hindus. It is made up of three words each with a pertinent meaning.

To understand this, first of all we must diverge from the present discussion for a while. People all over the world have been looking for proof of the origin of the world. Several hypotheses have been put forward. As it is impossible to go back to those years that are gone by, we really do not know the real origin of the universe.

In Hinduism, our ancient *ṛṣis* (seers) analysed these questions 5,000 years ago, without any scientific instruments whatever. They used their intellect and intuition and came up with some answers. They had their own theory of creation. We may not accept their explanation totally, but their theory has some solid truth.

First of all, they realised that ''primordial energy'' was the source of creation. Without energy, none of us can survive. This energy has been there in the past, it is present now and it will be present in the future. It will remain the same all the time.

(a) This energy is ETERNAL. This energy by nature is pure. It is we who have energy inside us, who act either purely or impurely.

(b) This energy is PURE. It is uncontaminated.

(c) This energy is UNMANIFEST. Energy has no form or shape. We cannot visualise it. We cannot hear it or touch it. It is beyond the reach of our sense-organs. As it is beyond these sense-organs, our mind also cannot see it.

(d) This energy is OMNIPRESENT. It is inside us and all around us and all-powerful. It is in every person. There is no living creature which has no energy.

(e) This energy is OMNISCIENT. As it is there all the time and is in all creatures, it is all-knowing.

(f) This energy is the source of all nourishment. It is the giver of life to all. The food we eat comes from the land, sun and water. There is potential energy in all of these. If comes out as foodcrops. We are nourished by the crops.

(g) Understanding this and many other qualities of energy, the *ṛṣis* developed a sense of love and reverence and gratitude to it.

To express their gratitude, they invented the word *OṀ*. *Oṁ* is after all a syllable, a word. What is a word? A word is something which denotes something. For example, 'tomato' means that which has all the qualities of a tomato we know. It cannot be anything other than the 'tomato' we know.

Similarly, *OṀ* means *Brahman*, the formless primordial energy. Instead of expressing all qualities of the energy, the word *Oṁ* (embracing all the qualities) is used. Our *ṛṣis* named the energy *Brahman*, without form and without any qualities. They said *Brahman* had a desire to create. He used the five gross elements (earth, air, water, fire and space) and expressed them as 'life'. All the living creatures are made up of the five elemens. They are alive when that energy is inside and dead when that energy leaves them.

Just as we revere our mother and father who brought us into this world and who cared for us with unselfish love, our *ṛṣis* felt that we must respect that *Brahman* who created the universe and who is sustaining it. This respect to *Brahman* was shown by meditating on it. One can understand how difficult it is to meditate on something which has no form and shape. Our *ṛṣis*, by bringing out the word *Oṁ* denoting *Brahman*, asked us to meditate on the name. But this had to be with true love and respect. This was called *upāsanā*.

By constantly thinking of *Brahman*, the pure, the kind, the supporting, the omnipresent, the omnipotent Being, they said that one will achieve liberation. As it was difficult to meditate on this word *Oṁ*, in the *Purāṇic* period the formless *Brahman* was given name and form and was called *saguṇa Brahman*. This brought into being gods (*deva*s). Depending on which god or *deva* one feels happier with, they asked us to offer prayers to that form. This is *bhakti*. *Bhakti*, in simple words, is devotion. Devotion is total identification with the one who is loved.

The *Gītā* is taking us back to the formless *Brahman*. It wants us to unite with the formless *Brahman*. That unity with formless *Brahman* is liberation.

Oṁ Tat Sat, is said to be the most sacred *mantra*s. Why? *Oṁ* is the most ancient form of representation of the formless *Brahman*, the Creator. It represents the transcendental, Pure Self. It is this *Brahman*, as a part of His energy, who has projected Himself as body, mind and intellect and developed association with the outer world.

Tat means 'that'. It is that eternal goal we all have to achieve. We all have to achieve the ever-perfect state. If all of us try to master all the twenty-six divine virutes, the universes will be a wonderful place to live in. To maintain harmony in the universe, we must avoid egotistic actions. Our aim should be to achieve *tat*. *Tat* is 'That'. We came from 'that' and we merge back into 'that' at the end.

Sat means 'Truth', the Eternal Truth. The whole existence of this universe is based on this 'Truth'. The principle of existence is energy and that energy is *Brahman* and *Brahman* is *Oṁ* and that *Oṁ* incorporates all gods and *deva*s, and all the gods and *deva*s are nothing but the 'Pure Self' inside each of us. By forgetting this Truth we have become people with names and forms and it has become a selfish world.

The Lord says that 'Oṁ tat sat' is the triple designation of *Brahman*. The same *Brahman*, when He created life, gave us all knowledge also. Our *ṛṣi*s 5000 years ago, came out with some special words and sentences. They came out with them at certain special moments of inspiration. They attributed it to divine power and did not call themselves as the authors of those sentences. The compilation of these divine utterances is *Veda*s. The *Veda*s describe the origin of the universe, they give rules and regulations for all activities one has to perform. The sum and substance of the *Veda*s is nothing but the knowledge of *Brahman*.

The *Veda*s consist of *karma-kāṇḍa* (rituals), *upāsanā-kāṇḍa* (meditation) and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (knowledge). In other words, *Oṁ Tat Sat,* which indicates *Brahman,* is also responsible for the creation of *Veda*s, brāhmaṇas and *yajña*s. The total knowledge is created by *Brahman*. We have to learn from the *Veda*s, the way of life in society. We are meant to live for the welfare of all. Our *ṛṣi*s asked us to meditate on this triple designation. It is called *nirdeśa*. By performing *nirdeśa*, any defects in the worship are removed.

All our actions bring their proper rewards in course of time. Pure actions bring pure rewards. Actions with good intentions bring good results. If we can perform our actions remembering the glory of *Brahman*, such actions become sacred.

The best way is to repeat '*Oṁ tat sat*' with *bhāvanā* (recollecting true meaning) and devotion (with intention of becoming one with *Brahman*) whenever we perform any activities in this world. It makes us pure. It helps us to attain *mokṣa* and also helps to crete peace and harmony in the universe. By saying *Oṁ tat sat*, we declare that *Brahman* is real and the phenomenal world is false (*Brahma satyam jagat mithyā*).

We should practise to repeat this most sacred *mantra* with perfect knowledge of its true meaning, in all our actions everyday.

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ।।२४।।
***tasmād om ity udāhṛtya yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ* |**
***pravartante vidḥānoktāḥ satataṁ brahmavādinām* ||24||**

Therefore, the knowers of Brahman *always begin the various acts of sacrifice, charity and* tapas *as enjoined by the* śāstras, *with the utterance of the sacred word Oṁ.*

brahmavādinam: Knowers of the *Brahman*.
udāhṛtya: Uttering.
pravartante: Begin.

The Lord is making one simple definitive statement here. He speaks about those who are the knowers of *Brahman* (*brahmavādinaḥ*). It includes all those who have understood the origin of life and sustenance of life by something higher than themselves and respect that higher *Brahman*. They know that they themselves are part of that *Brahman*. They have no sense of ego in them. They remember this truth always (*satatam*).

What do such *brahmavādin*s do? They perform all their activities (enjoined by *śastra*s) by saying *Oṁ* (*tasmāt 'Oṁ' iti udāhṛtya*). What kind of activities? *Yajña, dāna, tapaḥ*; daily acts of work, charitable work and the three types of *tapas* of body, mind and speech (as described in the *śāstra*s). The knowers of *Brahman*, in any form of activities utter the sacred syallable *Oṁ*. Not only that, when they finish the work, they say '*hari oṁ tat sat*' again.

Why do they do it? They realise that they themselves are just a small drop in the ocean. They know that their existence is only due to *Brahman*. All their power, position, wealth and their good health are due to *Brahman*. They do not blame the *Brahman* for anything wrong in their lives, including ill health, loss of position, etc. They attribute faults to themselves but thank the Lord for everthing else. They do not forget the Creator *Brahman* even for a moment.

In *Uttara-Rāmāyaṇa*, Hanumān came to persuade Lava and Kuśa to give the sacred horse back. The little boys had defeated many powerful soldiers who had come to retrieve Śrī Rāma's horse. Lava and Kuśa used *Brahmāstra* to fight Hanumān. Hanumān fell to the ground unconscious but the little boys could not approach him because every part of Hanumān's body (*roma roma meṁ rāma*) was repeating the sacred name of Rāma.

Similarly, *brahmavādin*s always repeat *Oṁ* with all sincerity. They cherish the divine awareness of the Infinite. They add divinity to all their acts. Their minds are liberated from the shcakles of day-to-day life. They will be generous in their charities, selfless in their *yajña*s and efficient in their *tapas*.

तदित्यनभिसंधाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः ।
दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ॥२५॥
tad ity anabhisandhāya phalaṁ yajña-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ |
dānakriyāśca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ **||25||**

Uttering 'tat', *without aiming at fruits of action, all acts of* yajña, tapas *and charities are performed by the seekers of* mokṣa.

anabhisandhāya: Without desiring.

After telling us when to say *Oṁ*, the Lord says how and when to say *tat*.

As we have discussed in verse 23 of this chapter, *tat* means 'That'. What is 'That'? It is that which sustains the universe. It is 'That', that is present in all. It is the 'Universal One'. All of us are parts of that 'Universal One'.

All types of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* are performed by spiritual seekers to attain liberation. They act in such a way that they do not get any agitations in their minds. They are constantly burning away the existing *vāsanā*s and the Lord is telling them of the ways of not accumulating new *vāsanā*s. If one does not aim for the rewards for one's own actions, (*phalam anabhisandhāya*), whatever they do, they say '*tat*', i.e., it is all 'that', it is all 'His'.

The aspirant for *mokṣa*, in the later stages of evolution, will realise that he should not even have the desire to attain *mokṣa*. So, *jīvanmukta*s continue to perform all actions which are aimed at welfare of all.

How should one remember the ''Universal Oneness''? I am part of the family I am living in. I am not a separate member apart from my family. My family is part of the community. Working for the community is to overlook family interest. To work for the nation means overlooking selfish interest of my community in my area. To work for the world and humanity is to overlook selfish interest of my nation.

All works of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*, should therefore be dedicated to '*tat*'. There should be no ego at individual, family, community and national level. Each higher step is better than the immediate lower step. The final step is the best of all.

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते ।
प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ॥ २६॥
***sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca sad ity etat prayujyate* |**
***praśaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate* ||26||**

O Pārtha, the word 'sat' *is used in the sense of reality and of goodness and also in the sense of an auspicious act.*

sadbhāve: In the sense of reality.
sādhubhāve: In the sense of goodness.
prayujyate: Is used.
praśaste karmaṇi: In the sense of highest action.

As we have discussed in verse 23, '*sat*' means 'The Truth'. What is the 'Truth'? *Brahman* is the real Truth. What is *Brahman*? *Brahman* is goodness. Hence it is said, *sadbhāve* and *sādhubhāve*. In the sense of reality one should realise *sat*. The Truth is *Brahman*. What do we normally do? We use the power of sense-organs, mind and intellect in our daily activities and realise that it is we, the physical body doing all the daily activities.

Really speaking, it is not *sat*. Reality is the 'Truth' of our existence and it is *Brahman*. We, who do all activities, are not really the doers. We are not the ego, but *Brahman*. *Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi*, is the spirit we must develop. Because *Brahman* is nothing but goodness (compassionate to all), one should have *sādhubhāva*. *Sat* is used to mean 'goodness' also. *Sat* is therefore both ''the reality'' and ''the goodness''.

Similarly, all *karma*s have to have the reality and goodness combined in them. They then become *satkarma*. *Satkarma* means real good work (divine work) and good work for the welfare of all.

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।
कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ॥२७॥

yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ sad iti cocyate |
karma caiva tadarthīyaṁ sad ity evābhidhīyate ||27||

Steadfastness in yajña, dāna *and* tapas *is called* sat *and also actions performed for these is called* sat.

tadarthīyam karma: Actions performed for the sake of these.
abhidhiyate: Is said.

When a man has reached the level of spiritual maturity, he will develop the understanding of *Brahman*. He would have developed strong faith in *Brahman*. He will be ever steadfast in the principle underlying *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*. He knows the reality of the principle, i.e., *sat*.

As he has understood the *sat*-aspect of *Brahman*, he will perform the various acts *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*, not to gain any fruits of action. Actions are a must for everbody. They are the only means of burning away the past *saṁskāras* (*vāsanās*).

Such actions performed with real understanding of the Truth is also called *sat*. If the actions are performed for gaining the fruits of action, (for any motive) including the desire to attain *mokṣa*, they are not true actions. They become *asat*. It is therefore necessary initially to drop off *tāmasika* and *rājasika* actions. Later, one should drop off even *sāttvika* actions to gain liberation. This stage is reached by rare men and they are called *jīvanmuktas*. Hence the prayer ''*Oṁ asato mā sadgamaya*'', "from *asat* to *sat*, let me travel in *sat*.''

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥२८॥
aśraddhayā hutaṁ dattaṁ tapas taptaṁ kṛtaṁ ca yat |
asad ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha ||28||

O Pārtha, whatever is sacrificed, given as charity, whatever tapas *is performed, and whatever actions are performed without faith are called asat. They do not produce good in this world or hereafter (after death).*

hutam: What is sacrificed.
dattam: What is given in charity.
taptam tapaḥ: Austerity performed.
pretya: Hereafter.

The two words to understand in this verse are *śraddhā* and *asat*. The entire chapter is dedicated to *śraddhā*. Is is *śraddha-traya-vibhāga-yoga*. Any action performed with faith will bring high dividends. This is true in our daily activities also. A student who studies with total faith in what he is studying will do well not only in his exams, but also in future life. Even in the act of cooking, the food tastes better if it is cooked with faith.

Success, in short, comes to any actions done with the utmost faith in such action. Good or bad effects of one's action will depend on the strength of faith with which one undertakes such actions. Actions undertaken without faith then become *aśraddhā*.

Sat, as we have discussed so far in this chapter, is the 'Truth'. One's activities with faith in *Brahman* then become *sat* action (i.e., true actions). All other actions which have no faith in *Brahman* become *asat*. *Asato mā sadgamaya*, is the prayer which means, ''let me get the faith in the Truth, let me travel from the path of *asat* to the path of *sat*''. Let all my actions develop faith in *Brahman* which is the only 'Truth'.

In the spiritual field, all acts of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* must have an underlying faith in *Brahman*. The Lord says that actions performed without faith do not get any profit now or later. This applies to actions at both spiritual and material levels. Our actions in the material world not only fail to give profits immediately but also fail to produce profit at a later date if there is no faith in such actions. Faith, in short, brings success.

As we have discussed in the *Gītā* so far, we are born again and again to burn totally all our *vāsanā*s. If we have no faith in *Brahman*, automatically we accumulate more *vāsanā*s. All our actions will be egotistical and are bound to produce *vāsanās*. We have to cut our shackles by only one weapon. That weapon is faith in *Brahman*. What is the purpose of spiritual study if we do not develop "faith in Him"? We find no end to the cycle of of *saṁsāra* till we develop *śraddhā* in Him. So, the Lord says in a negative statement, "the man without faith has no success hereafter" (*pretya*). What is the meaning of "success hereafter"? If one wants to achieve *mokṣa*, one must achieve freedom from the cycle of births and death initially. His goal is to attain *mokṣa*. Towards achieving this end, one must develop the utmost faith in his actions. He should keep the goal in mind constantly. This is essential for burning one's *tāmasika* and *rājasika* qualities. Automatically, on reaching the *sāttvika* state in all one's activities of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*, one will find it easy to go to the state of '*śuddha sattva*' state. To reach this state, one has to drop even the desire to attain *mokṣa*. This state has to be experienced only. No amount of theoretical description will make this statement clear. Ultimately, one will attain 'the knowledge' and attain Godhood.

Sādhanā is the effort one puts in. *Sādhya* is what one achieves by his *sādhanā*. *Sādhanā* in the spiritual field is meant to attain *mokṣa*. The goal achieved is *mokṣa*. The guiding force in achieving success (*sādhya*) is *śraddhā* in all acts of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*.

इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे
श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगो नाम सप्तदशोऽध्यायः॥
iti śrīmad-bhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde śraddhātraya-
vibhāga-yogo nāma saptadaśo'dhyāyaḥ ||

CHAPTER 18

MOKṢA-SAṀNYĀSA-YOGA

This is the final chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The Lord has summarised the entire *Gītā* in this chapter.

Mokṣa is liberation. It is a philosophical word. In one's spiritual quest, one understands that the body is made up of the intellect, mind and sense-organs which are vitalised and which function through the presence of the *ātmā* (Self) inside. This *ātmā* is part of the *Paramātmā*. Because the body covers the *ātmā, ātmā* is not seen. Also, as the body is in constant contact with the outer world, the *ātmā* seemingly forgets its true nature and starts analysing the outer world in terms of likes, dislikes, hate, etc. This is then called the ego.

Ego, due to its contact with the world, suffers or enjoys the pains and pleasures of the worldly life. Ego develops innumerable attachments to various objects in the world. It develops a desire to obtain pleasures from various sources. These remain as *vāsanā*s (*saṁskāra*s) in one's mind.

In an ordinary person's span of physical existence from birth to death, there will be accumulation of *vāsanā*s. Some of them will be strong unfulfilled desires. The mind which is the subtle body, will retain all the *vāsanā*s that are not fulfilled. After physical death, the soul is not free to join *Paramātmā*, of which it is a part because it is tainted with *vāsanā*s which are considered as 'impurities'. To liquidate the *vāsanā*s, the Lord vitalises the five gross elements and brings out a new life. That new life will carry the old *vāsanā*s called *saṁskāra*s.

In the process of fulfilling past desires, unfortunately the new ego, with its old *vāsanā*s, accumulates more *vāsanā*s. This process is called *saṁsāra* or cycle of births and deaths. Depending on the types of *vāsanā*s, the new birth will be in a good or bad environment.

Another aspect of life has to be understood at this stage. The physical body undergoes various modifications during its sojourn in life. It will have the same Soul but goes through babyhood to old age. Every moment gone is considered as death. The present time is 'the present'. Moments after the present are future. There is a constant cycle of births and deaths of time every moment of our life. Also, the change over from babyhood to childhood, childhood to teenage, etc. is not really fixed to a particular point in one's life. They are gradual changes. One change dies to bring a new stage in. In new change one will try to fulfil desires accumulated from the previous form. Physical death is just a continuity of this process of change and a new birth is the continuity of the same process as well.

Our ancient seers perfectly understood this process. They searched for a state of happiness. All types of earthly happiness, they found, were momentary and also led to sorrow in the end. They also found that all sorrows are not permanent but are replaced by happiness later.

By understanding the nature of the Self, they found that constant contact with one's real nature will keep a person in a state of bliss. By dropping the egotistical attachment to the world, by realising that ego is not the real Self, they found that there was no suffering to be experienced. The mind of such people remains pure and in constant remembrance of, and contact with, the 'Self' within. On physical death they will not have a new birth their *ātmā* will merge with *Paramātmā*.

Reversal of the cycle of *saṁsāra* breaking the shackles of *saṁsāra* would need burning away of existing *vāsanā*s. This is done by selfless work (*niṣkāma karma*). It would be necessary to make sure that no new *vāsanā*s come in. This is by *karma-phala-tyāga*, i.e., renouncing the fruits of any action.

Finally, when the mind is totally pure, one is said to be 'liberated'. He has achieved the state of *mokṣa* wherein he does not get attached to the outside world. He is said to be in a state of 'total bliss'. He has reached the 'Truth'; he has understood the real knowledge. This state of *sat* (truth) *cit* (knowledge) and *ānanda* (bliss) is the state of *mokṣa*.

To achieve this state one has to renounce his attachment to the outside world. Renouncing the ego is *saṁnyāsa*. "I am not the doer, I am not the enjoyer, I am not the sufferer", all these states come under *saṁnyāsa*.

Each one of us has various *vāsanā*s of different qualities in us. They are *tāmasika*, *rājasika* and *sāttvika*. We have to drop *tāmasika* and *rājasika* qualities. The dropping of these qualities is *tyāga*. Once one has reached the state of *sattva*, one has to renounce the ego as well to achieve liberation. In spiritual progress, *tyāga* of bad qualities comes first. *Saṁnyāsa* of ego comes next and finally one achieves *mokṣa*.

This chapter, as it deals with *mokṣa* through the process of renunciation, is called *mokṣa-saṁnyāsa*. As it leads one to be united with the Lord, it is *yoga*. Another interpretation for the title of this chapter is as follows:

One has to renounce even the thought of *mokṣa*, to attain union with the *Paramātmā*. It is *mokṣa-saṁnyāsa-yoga*. As long as one is a slave to his body he is the bound soul (*jīva*). When he is not bound to the body, he is a liberated Soul. Where is the question of *mokṣa* for such a person? He is a free Soul. Soul is real and *jīva* (ego) is not real. Once having understood this truth, one can try to live with this truth. Finally one will get merged in the Truth and that is *mokṣa*.

अर्जुन उवाच
संन्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।
त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक्केशिनिषूदन ॥१॥

arjuna uvāca
saṁnyāsasya mahābāho tattvam icchāmi veditum |
tyāgasya ca hṛṣīkeśa pṛthak keśiniṣūdana ||1||

Arjuna said

O mighty-armed, I desire to know what saṁnyāsa *is and what* tyāga *is, in essence. Tell me of them separately, O Hṛṣīkeśa, the slayer of Keśi.*

keśiniṣūdana: Killer of the demon Keśi.

pṛthak: Separately.
hṛṣīkeśa: Controller of the senses.

So far in the *Gītā*, the word *tyāga* and *saṁnyāsa* have been used in various contexts. Arjuna had not got a clear definition of these terms. Hence, as a sincere student, he is asking for a definition of the two terms.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in this chapter, deals with the process of abandonment (*tyāga*) and renunciation, (*saṁnyāsa*). Arjuna uses the title Keśiniṣūdana to address Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Keśi was a demon who disguised himself as a horse to kill Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa put his arms into the horse's mouth and split it into two. Hence Kṛṣṇa is also called Keśava.

श्रीभगवानुवाच
काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं संन्यासं कवयो विदुः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः ॥२॥

śrī bhagavān uvāca
kāmyānāṁ karmaṇāṁ nyāsaṁ saṁnyāsaṁ kavayo viduḥ |
sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṁ prāhustyāgaṁ vicakṣaṇāḥ ||2||

The Lord said

The sages understand saṁnyāsa *as the renunciation of all desireful actions. The learned declare* tyāga *as the abandoning of all fruits of actions.*

kāmyānām: Desireful.
nyāsam: Renunciation.
vicakṣaṇāḥ: The Learned.
prāhuḥ: Declare.

One needs to read this verse carefully. On the face of it, *saṁnyāsa* and *tyāga* appear to be the same.

Saṁnyāsa is renunciation of all desireful actions. This is to be taken as ''the present''. *Tyāga* is abandoning of all fruits of actions. This is 'future'. Fruits always come later as a result of present actions. Anxiety to obtain the fruits will cause agitations in one's mind and his present actions will not be so strong.

Hence, *tyāga* or abandonment of fruits of action is the first prerequisite.

Desire to obtain any object comes because of the identification of the *ātmā* with the physical body, i.e., because of ego. If ego is dropped, there is no more 'I'-ness in one's actions. This dropping of ego is *saṁnyāsa*.

Many people have a notion of becoming *saṁnyāsī*s by wearing ochre robes and going to a centre of pilgrimage or to the forest. This is not true *saṁnyāsa*. Mere abandoning of household responsibilities does not take away one's ego. On must stay with the present and act accordingly but should not act with ego to fulfil a desire.

Both *tyāga* and *saṁnyāsa* do not suggest abandonment of the work. The Lord has never advocated abandoning work for anybody. The Lord through His presence in all, is advising all to work for universal welfare. The whole philosophy of the *Gītā* is selfless universal work with a sense of unity. It is *advaita* philosophy. There are no 'two' different entities. *Nāma* and *rūpa* (name and form) are the reason for our attachment. It makes us egotistical. *Sat, cit, ānanda* is real and gets us united with the universe.

All our work will be more effective if we work without agitations. A calm, peaceful and pure mind can bring the best out of any action. The work then becomes divine.

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ।
यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे ॥३॥

tyājyaṁ doṣavad ity eke karma prāhur manīṣiṇaḥ |
yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-karma na tyājyam iti cāpare ||3||

Some learned people declare that action should be abandoned as an evil. Others declare that acts of yajña, dāna *and* tapas *should not be abandoned.*

doṣavat: As evil.
prāhuḥ: Declare.
apare: Others.

The *Sāṁkhya* philosophers consider 'Soul' to be the only part in us. They consider that the body leads to actions, actions accumulate *vāsanā*s and *vāsanā*s lead one to *saṁsāra*. Hence they consider all actions by the physical body (*upādhi*) as evil. Some other philosophers do not think so. They believe that one should not abandon *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapa*s. They insist on men performing these acts according to the spirit of the *śāstra*s.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa goes on to give His personal view on this matter. It shows us that even at that time, one did not have a clear understanding of the *śāstra*s. *Śāstra*s were learnt by a select group of people and their interpretation was the rule for their followers. The *Veda*s being vast, one had not got enough time to master them.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa out of compassion to humanity, has given a proper direction to Mankind by His summary of the *Veda*s. The *Veda*s are our treasure-house and it is up to us to know what treasures we have and how to make use of them.

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।
त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधः संप्रकीर्तितः ॥४॥
***niścayaṁ śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharatasattama* I**
***tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ saṁprakīrtitaḥ* II4II**

O best of Bharatas, hear from Me, the final decision about tyāga. *O best of men,* tyāga *has been declared to be threefold.*

bharatasattama: The best of Bharatas.
puruṣavyāghra: Best of men.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa having taken the role of the teacher has made a definitive statement to His disciple's question. On important topics, the real teacher has to give his own definite views. On a sincere student, these strong views of the teacher will leave an everlasting impression. One has to be a master of the subject to give one's view. Nobody else has a right to make such strong assertions.

Tyāga is of three types. We have discussed the three qualities in chapters 14 and 17. The Lord now brings them together again in greater detail.

The Lord uses the word *puruṣa-vyāghra* to address Arjuna. *Vyāghra* means a tiger. The tiger is a very determined animal. The Lord wants Arjuna to understand what He has taught him. He wants His student to act with firm determination from what he has learnt.

> यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।
> यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥५॥
> ***yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-karma na tyājyaṁ kāryam eva tat* ।**
> ***yajño dānaṁ tapaś caiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām* ॥5॥**
>
> *Acts of* yajña, dāna *and* tapas *should not be abandoned; they should be performed indeed.* Yajña, dāna *and* tapas *are purifiers even for the wise.*

The Lord uses the words:

1. **Na tyājyam**: Should not be abandoned.
2. **Kāryameva tat**: Should be performed.

He has used both negative and positive assertions to emphasise the same meaning. He is very emphatic. He insists that all forms of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapa*s must be performed. He has already described what types of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapa*s constitute *sāttvika* type. One must perform only *sāttvika* type of actions. Why is the Lord insisting on that? Because, they purify one's mind. What is the benefit of a pure mind?

(a) One burns existing *vāsanā*s. Without it, no progress can be made towards achieving *mokṣa*. One must learn oneself what are the consequences of one's desires. Only by practical experience, can one become wise.

(b) One can perform *karma-phala-tyāga* which is essential for universal welfare.

The Lord is compassionate to individuals and the universe. After all, he created both. He wants us individuals to join Him at the end but he wants us to be His messengers while living in this existence. He wants us to perform His divine acts, as His servants and He promises us, the servants, freedom in return.

In a democracy, we want slavery to be abolished. Why not abolish the slavery of attachment to our own bodies?

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।
कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ॥६॥
etāny api tu karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā phalāni ca |
kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitaṁ matam uttamam ||6||

Even these acts should be performed leaving aside attachment and the fruits, this is my certain and best opinion, O Pārtha.

Etānyapi tu karmāṇi: (Even these acts). The Lord is referring to *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapa*s. These have been described in chapter 17.

How should one perform these acts? Which is the best way of doing them? What is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's opinion? We are talking of attaining 'the Knowledge' all through the *Gītā*, the subject-matter discussed is aimed at wiping out 'ignorance'. The path to 'the Knowledge' is the path to 'the Truth' and this is the 'path to liberation'.

If one is trying to be freed from the cycle of *saṁsāra,* all acts must be performed with the two basic principles.

(1) Give up the attachment to the work.
(2) Do not look for fruits of action.

Attachment in the sense used in the *Gītā* is about our clinging to the objects of the world. Our clinging to objects comes from the false notion of ego. After all the real 'us' is nothing but the '*ātman*' inside all of us. Even our physical body does come under objects of the world. Opposite to this is 'detachment'. As we discussed before, our actions are due to desires and fulfilling desires of ego means 'attachment' to the objects of the world. It is a sense of false relationship, as we are not ego but '*ātman*'. Renounce ego (*saṁnyāsa*) is the Lord's opinion.

Tyaktvā phalāni ca: Do not look for fruits of action. This is *karma-phala tyāga*. Anxiety to fulfil desires does reduce one's potential in any field of work.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says that it is His personal opinion and considers it to be the best. *Veda*s, which are so vast, do not give a definitive statement like this. One could infer this when one goes through them in minute detail.

Out of compassion to His disciple (and to entire Mankind), Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives His opinion. If we have faith in Him, we should follow what He advocates. There is no selfish notion in the Lord. His opinion is the best because the actions performed this way will benefit the individual and society.

नियतस्य तु संन्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ।
मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तामसः परिकीर्तितः ॥७॥

niyatasya tu saṁnyāsaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate |
mohāt tasya parityāgas tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ ||7||

Verily, the renunciation of obligatory actions is not proper. The abandoning of the same from delusion is declared to be tāmasika.

niyatasya: Obligatory.
na upapadyate: Is not proper.

What are *tāmasika* actions? The Lord answers the question in this verse. Each one of us has two duties in this world. (1) Moral duties for being part of the world. (2) Spiritual duties for being part of the *Paramātmā*.

We cannot forget that we are not only a part of the Lord but also of the world. As long as we enjoy the social life, as long as we get protection and profit from the society, we have no right to abandon our obligatory duties to the society.

We are obliged to the Lord and to the society. Our *śāstra*s have described the duties one has to perform. *Niyatasya karmaṇo* the Lord says. Regular, daily performance of the duties as dictated by the *śāstra*s is compulsory. If we do not perform the obligatory duties, then it becomes *tāmasika tyāga*. Leaving one's family and going to the centres of pilgrimage (*saṁnyāsa*) is therefore *tāmasika*. The duties may not be performed for various reasons. It could be due to ignorance of the laws, negligence or laziness. Whatever may be the reason, it still becomes a *tāmasika* act.

As regards our relationship with society, we have the judiciary system. If we commit a mistake by not knowing a particular aspect of law, we are not excused by law. 'Ignorance of law is no excuse'. We cannot win our case in any court of law on this pretext.

Similarly, in spiritual work, ignorance of the *śāstra*s is considered as *tāmasika*. If we perform *tāmasika* acts, our rewards will be those that bind us to the cycle of *saṁsāra* (and the consequent unhappiness we experience). We must therefore (1) be servants of the Lord and perform divine acts; (2) be servants of the society and perform duties for mutual co-existence.

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात्त्यजेत् ।
स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत् ॥८॥
duḥkham ity eva yat karma kāyakleśa-bhayāt tyajet |
sa kṛtvā rājasaṁ tyāgaṁ naiva tyāgaphalaṁ labhet ||8||

He who abandons action from fear of bodily discomfort because it is painful, thus performing rājasika tyāga, *obtains not the fruit of 'abandonment'.*

kāya-kleśa-bhayāt: From fear of bodily discomfort.

The obligatory duties, if they are not performed due to ignorance, laziness or neglect becomes *tāmasika tyāga*. On the other hand, if one abandons such duties because they are painful or because they cause discomfort then that *tyāga* becomes *rājasika*.

Arjuna did not want to fight. First of all, he was ignorant of the real meaning of the *śāstra*s (in relation to the battle he was facing). It was therefore a *tāmasika tyāga*. Also he did not want to fight because he did not want to suffer the mental agony of killing his 'own people'. This was *rājasika tyāga*. In the performance of duty to uphold *dharma* as a kṣatriya, he had to face injury or death to himself or his people. The Lord said: *titikṣasva* (endure). One must endure bodily or mental discomfort in performing obligatory duties.

The *śāstra*s say that we should get up reasonably early every morning and have a bath. We all have our own reasons for not doing so. They appear difficult to start with. If one can overcome them, one will find that his work that day actually goes better. He would be able to go to work, clean and fresh. Similarly, the practice of fasting on certain auspicious days, eating *sāttvika* type of food is actually beneficial in the long run. They produce discomfort to start with. The *śāstra*s too tell us not to eat at certain times.

In a way, performing obligatory duties in itself is *tyāga*. We are abandoning bodily discomfort. Such *tyāga* gives us greater experience of joy later. A caterpillar abandons its physical body to become a beautiful butterfly. To get this transformation it hibernates for weeks in its shell. As parents, we sacrifice our bodily comfort in bringing up our children, especially in earlier days of their growth. It gives us a sense of joy to see our children grow up and become useful members of the society.

The Lord says that by such *tyāga*, they do not even get the fruits of real *karma-phala-tyāga*. Arjuna, thought he would, by not fighting and by becoming a *saṁnyāsī*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, he would incur sin by such abandonment, rather than attaining *mokṣa*.

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।
सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥९॥

kāryam ity eva yat karma niyataṁ kriyate'rjuna |
saṅgaṁ tyaktvā phalaṁ caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ ||9||

Whatever action is done, O Arjuna, merely because it ought to be done, abandoning attachment and desire for fruit, such abandonment is regarded as sāttvika.

We all have a wrong conception of life. We have reversed our roles in society due to ignorance which in turn is due to ego. We have not learnt the *śāstra*s, we have not understood the *śāstra*s or we have not cared for the *śāstra*s. This is the cause for the miseries we face in this world.

What we should abandon is not our obligatory duties but only the desires and fruits of work. The Lord says, *kāryam ityeva, niyatam karma kriyate*: "That ought to be done as prescribed by the *śāstra*s".

The *sāttvika* person who understands the *śāstra*s abandons the sense of ego and abandons the desire to reap the fruits of such actions. He even abandons the desire to attain *mokṣa*. His actions are always divine and he knows that he is doing only God's work, as a servant of the God.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa condemns abandonment of action. He wants everyone to do his duties to his God within and to the society he lives in. Real *tyāga* in this sense makes us more active men in the world.

न द्वेष्ट्यकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते ।
त्यागी सत्त्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशयः ॥१०॥
na dveṣṭy akuśalaṁ karma kuśale nānuṣajjate |
tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo medhāvī chinnasaṁśayaḥ ||10||

The sāttvika tyāgī *possessed by purity, intelligence and with all doubts cut asunder, does not hate any disagreeable action nor is he attached to an agreeable action.*

sattvasamāviṣṭo: Possessed by purity.
akuśalam karma: Disagreeable action.
kuśale: Agreeable.
anuṣajjate: Attached.

Three attributes of the *sāttvika* person are described by the Lord in this verse.

(1) Purity. (2) Intelligence. (3) With all doubts cut asunder.

(a) **Sattvasamāviṣṭo:** As we have discussed before, we all have a combination of all the three qualities in us. We exhibit them at different times in different situations. They are all due to our *vāsanā*s, which we have carried from our past. Our main quality is what we have in the majority in our *vāsanā*s.

A *sāttvika* personality means one who has preponderance of *sāttvika* qualities in him. *Sattva* is pure and so a *sāttvika*-natured person will possess purity as his main character.

(b) **Medhāvī**: (Intelligent). *Medhāvī* is a man of firm, proper understanding. He is intelligent. He understands what he has learnt and also keeps that understanding in his memory and uses that memory at all times. In spiritual progress, an intelligent man remembers his true divine nature and does not fall a victim to his own senses. He knows the nature of *prakṛti* and does not got attached to it. He keeps a sense of detachment to worldly objects. He also knows the nature of *puruṣa* inside him and constantly endeavours to remember it. He uses his *medhā-śakti* (power of intelligence) to keep his *sāttvika* temperament constantly in all his actions.

(c) **Chinnasaṁśayaḥ**: Such a person has no doubts on the nature of the Lord. He has understood (by study of the *śāstra*s, by teachers and by personal experiences) how *prakṛti* binds him and knows how not to get attached to it. He knows that any sense of happiness he gets from the *prakṛti* is only short-lived. He knows quite clearly that his ego is false and his *ātmā* is 'real'. He knows that God is in all. He has no doubts at all about the Lord. He keeps that understanding in his memory and shows that in his actions. He acts for universal welfare. Such a *sāttvika tyāgī* has developed a habit of abandoning his *tāmasika* and *rājasika* qualities. He has abandoned the devil in him. He does not nourish the devil in him. How does he show it in his actions? In our daily activities, we cannot be doing work that pleases us always. Some part of our work is bound to be disagreeable in some form or other. A judge constantly gives judgement on the accused. Some of them he will release, some he will punish, to some he may give life imprisonment or the death sentence. He does not hate giving harsh judgement. It is part of his duty to uphold the law and punish the criminal properly.

A *sāttvika tyāgī* has developed equanimity. He is *dvandair vimukta* (freed from pairs of opposites). He performs all prescribed duties. He is not attached to his actions nor does he hate what he has to do. If one were to analyse has mental composition, it will show a steady chart. There will be no peaks or troughs in the chart. There are no peaks when he is elated and no troughs when he is depressed.

A *sāttvika tyāgī* is performing his duties to burn existing *vāsanā*s. He has abandoned the desire to please his ego. He becomes an educated and cultured person by his actions. His actions show his culture. They always reflect his divinity which results in universal welfare.

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः ।
यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ॥११॥

na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṁ tyaktuṁ karmāṇy aśeṣataḥ |
yas tu karma-phala-tyāgī sa tyāgīty abhidhīyate ||11||

Indeed, for an embodied being, it is not possible to give up actions completely. He who abandons the desire for fruits of action is called a 'tyāgi'.

aśeṣataḥ: Without trace, completely.
tyaktum: To give up
dehabhṛt: Embodied being.
abhidhīyate: is called.

Who is an embodied being? All of us who are living, are embodied beings. What is the proof of existence? Showing the presence of life in all our activities. The proof of existence is the manifestation of life's activities.

We all have to work to live. We have to breathe, we have to eat, digest and excrete. So, as long as we live, it is impossible to live without actions. Śrī Kṛṣṇa therefore reiterates the way to work. We cannot abandon the work. Our *vāsanā*s will make us do the work. We can at least try not to accumulate new *vāsanā*s.

New *vāsanā*s accumulate when we start longing for the results of what we are doing now. Abandoning such longings for results is, according to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *tyāga*.

Tyāga is not a physical act. It is a mental attitude. As thoughts become desires, such thoughts that become desires must be abandoned.

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम् ।
भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां क्वचित् ॥१२॥
***aniṣṭam iṣṭaṁ miśraṁ ca trividhaṁ karmaṇaḥ phalam* I**
***bhavaty atyāginām pretya na tu saṁnyāsinām kvacit* II12II**

The three-fold results of action, evil, good and mixed, accrue to those who have no spirit of tyāga, *never to the* tyāgīs.

pretya: After death.
saṁnyāsinām: Those who have renounced.
kvacit: At any time.

The Lord is continuing to explain the meaning of non-attachment to action. It is because of a false sense of understanding by many who believe that actions lead to births and hence abandoning actions is considered to be the way to attain liberation. To explain this, one has to understand the principle of *vāsanā*s (*saṁskāra*s).

We have discussed about *vāsanā*s in our earlier reading of the *Gītā*. *Vāsanās*, we learnt, are our thought-imprints. Whatever thoughts we entertained, whatever desires we developed due to constant thought on a particular object, leave an imprint on our mind called *vāsanā*s. This imprint is an impurity on our mind. To wipe it off, that desire has to be fulfilled in an action.

Unfortunately, actions always result in reaction. There is a psychological reaction left behind every action. When there is something that pleases, our mind tries to repeat itself to get more of the same pleasure or something better than that which pleases. So, more thoughts flow in as a result of our actions. When we burn an existing *vāsanā*, we start developing new *vāsanā*s. Fruits of action tend to produce more *vāsanā*s in our mind.

The reactions to all our actions will be of *sāttvika, rājasika* or *tāmasika* type. Evil actions leave painful, disagreeable reactions (*aniṣṭam*), good actions leave agreeable reactions (*iṣṭam*). Mixed type of actions leave mixed reactions (*miśram*). Actions belong to the present. They are due to thoughts of the past. Reactions are there in the future. They leave future thought-tendencies in our mind.

Our future will depend on our present actions. If our reactions are good, we find ourselves in happy surroundings that help us to continue our good actions. If our reactions are bad, we find ourselves in surroundings that will encourage fulfilling our animal passions. If our reactions are mixed, we find ourselves in a combination of both. The majority of us, humans, fall into the last category. We have been blessed by the Lord for the good we have done in the past. He has given us the intellect which is the reasoning capacity in us.

This is the Hindu theory of re-incarnation. All of us have God inside us and all of us have a devil too inside us. It is our reactions to the present action which decide on what we will be and what we express in our future actions. So, *karma* or present action binds us if we have a desire to enjoy the results. If we do not abandon (*tyāga*) the results (*karma-phala*) we will suffer one of the three results (evil, good or mixed).

If we have no desire to enjoy, it will not bind us. The Lord uses an adjunctive *kvacit*. It means at no time one should have a desire to enjoy *karma-phala*. A momentary lapse will catch us and we will fall into the trap of *saṁsāra*.

For a real *tyāgī*, (of the fruits of action) there is no re-birth. He is said to have attained *mokṣa*. We must therefore renounce the sense of doership (*kartavya-bhāvanā*) and abandon the desire to enjoy the fruits of action.

पञ्चैतानि महाबाहो कारणानि निबोध मे ।
सांख्ये कृतान्ते प्रोक्तानि सिद्धये सर्वकर्मणाम् ॥१३॥
pañcaitāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me ।
sāṁkhye kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām ॥13॥

Learn from Me, O mighty-armed, the five aspects for the accomplishment of all actions, as declared in the Sāṁkhya *philosophy, which is the end of all actions.*

siddhaye: For the accomplishment.
kṛtānte: End of actions.
nibodha: Know.

The Lord has now taken up the theme of action. What is action? He has scientifically taken anatomical, physiological, psychological and intellectual levels of all actions. He says that there are five aspects for every action. All the five, if they work in happy coordination, will result in success from that part of the work.

The Lord also states that what He is saying is taken from the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy. Unfortunately, we do not have much literature on this philosophy (read introduction to chapter 2). The Lord has used the word *kṛtānte* in this verse. *Kṛta* means actions performed. *Ante* means end of such actions. One can give two meanings to this word.

In the *Veda*s, the first part is about *karma-kāṇḍa*. One is expected to attain knowledge by performing all actions. By performing all actions as per *śāstra*s and by gaining knowledge one will attain *mokṣa*. *Kṛtānte* therefore means the *Vedānta* as declared at the end of *karma-kāṇḍa* (according to *Sāṁkhya* philosophy). For the accomplishment (*siddhaye*) one should understand *karma-kāṇḍa* properly.

Another meaning of *Kṛtānte*: At the end of all actions to fulfil and burn the existing *vāsanā*s (and not accumulating new *vāsanā*s) one would accomplish liberation.

Vedānta is accomplishment of knowledge, which is the end of all actions.

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम् ।
विविधाश्च पृथक् चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम् ॥१४॥
adhiṣṭhānaṁ tathā kartā karaṇaṁ ca pṛthagvidham |
vividhāś ca pṛthak ceṣṭā daivaṁ caivātra pañcamam ||14||

In the accomplishment of karma, *the five factors are: (1) the seat (body); (2) the doer; (3) various senses; (4) various functions; (5) presiding deity.*

atra: In the accomplishment of *karma.*
adhiṣṭhānam: Body.
kartā: Doer (ego)
pṛthagvidham: Various.
karaṇam: Senses.
pṛthak: Various.
ceṣṭā: Functions.

It is not difficult to understand this verse if we read it carefully. After all, to function, we must have the body. This is *adhiṣṭhānam.* Without it, no function is possible.

We also need a sense of doership in our actions. This is the second, viz., our ego. Ego is actually our *ātman* (Self within us) projected out through our mind/intellect and sense-organs. The ego sets our body in constant activity.

The ego can fulfil its desires only through the medium of organs of perception. They are the *karaṇa*s (3). The eyes, nose, ears, mouth and skin, and mind and intellect are the medium or instruments for the ego to develop contact with the outer world.

The ego, after receiving the stimuli from the organs of perception, analysing it in the mind with the help of the intellect, uses the five bodily instruments (*karmendriya*s, i.e., limbs, organs of respiration, circulation, digestion and excretion). These constitute the *ceṣṭā* (4).

The organs of perception have a *deva* presiding over each function. They are the five gross elements. They are termed together as *daiva* (5) which completes the five aspects of every action.

(The *deva* for the eye is fire/light, for the ear—space, for the tongue—water, for the skin—air, and for the nose—earth.)

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म प्रारभते नरः ।
न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः ॥१५॥

śarīravāṅmanobhir yat karma prārabhate naraḥ |
nyāyyaṁ vā viparītaṁ vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ ||15||

Whatever action a man performs with his body, mind and speech, whether right or the opposite, these five are its causes.

nyāyyam: Prescribed by the *śāstra*s.
viparītam: Opposed to the *śāstra*s.
hetavaḥ: Causes.

Any action performed by any one of us has to have these five constituents. There is no exception.

To perform these actions, there has to be life in the person. That life-force is the 'spirit' or *ātmā*. 'Spirit' needs the body to express itself and body needs the spirit to function. The spirit conditioned by *vāsanā*s apparently becomes the *jīva* (ego) and associates itself with the body.

This can be better understood by taking the comparison of a car. Mechanical components of the car make the car move in any direction. These and the body of the car are the causes for the car to move. Petrol is needed to energise the mechanical parts. Petrol is compared to the spirit. It cannot be a total comparison. In this example, the petrol burns out and extinguishes itself. The spirit in us does not do so.

Any actions, proper or improper, still need the five constituents (*nyāyyam vā viparītam*).

तत्रैवं सति कर्तारमात्मानं केवलं तु यः ।
पश्यत्यकृतबुद्धित्वान्न स पश्यति दुर्मतिः ॥१६॥

tatraivaṁ sati kartāram ātmānaṁ kevalaṁ tu yaḥ |
paśyaty akṛtabuddhitvān na sa paśyati durmatiḥ ||16||

This being so, whoever on account of untrained understanding, thinks the Self alone as the doer, he of perverted intelligence, sees not.

tatra evam sati: Here, this being so.
akṛta-buddhitvāt: Untrained understanding.

So far, the Lord has reiterated what has been said in the previous chapters. Knowing that the body, the ego, the five senses, organs of action and the *deva*s are the cause of action, if one comes to think that the *ātmā* is the doer, according to the Lord, he is a *durmati* and *akṛta-buddhi*. Such a person has not trained his mind to know the truth. He has not understood or read the *śāstra*s. He is of perverted intelligence. What is the use of having intellect (by being born as humans) if one does not use it properly?

In a negative sense, the Lord is emphasising the fact that the Self is only a witness. It is not the doer. The actions seem to produce a taint on the Self but do not affect it in any way. One has to wipe the taint off by pure actions and eventually that Self is free to join the *Paramātmā*.

Let us take the example of a murderer or a person who commits an indecent act. It is performed by the physical body of that person and it is his 'ego' that made him do the wrong act. It is not right to say that the Lord inside him did the act. The ego of that person used his physical body to perform the crime.

The pure Self (*kevala ātmā*) is always a witness (*sākṣī*) but the person misunderstands and considers the *ātmā* to be the doer (*kartā*). By doing so, either due to untrained understanding or by perverted understanding, the individual forgets his divine inborn status.

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते ।
हत्वापि स इमाँल्लोकान्न हन्ति न निबध्यते ॥१७॥

yasya nāhaṁkṛto bhāvo buddhir yasya na lipyate |
hatvāpi sa imāṁllokān na hanti na nibadhyate ||17||

He, who is free from the egotistic notion of 'I am the doer', whose intelligence is not tainted, though having slain all the beings, he does not slay nor is he bound.

ahaṁ-kṛta bhāva: The feeling of "I am the doer"
lipyate: Tainted.
nibadhyate: Bound.

This verse is indirectly the answer to Arjuna's reason for despondency. Arjuna repeats several times (in the first chapter) that by slaying people one would commit sin. He says that he does not want to enjoy the kingdom after slaying so many people in the battlefield. He thinks that by slaying his elders, he is bound to go to hell.

Arjuna, to start off, went to the war to fight the evil-doers, Duryodhana and his associates. He went as part of the army consisting of the five brothers and their associates. It was a righteous war to uphold *dharma*.

The murderous activity on the battlefront is not commited by the soldier. The soldier would be acting under the principles of the banner of the army he is fighting for. The events on the battlefield are a group activity and hence they do not leave any *vāsanā*s on the individual soldier. The soldier should know that he is fighting for his army and his country. He is not performing the act individually.

Similarly, in our daily fight with different forces of thoughts in our minds, we should fight (carry on our duties as prescribed by the *śāstra*s) without the feeling of personal agency in such actions. We should constantly remind our ego that ''we are not the doer''. We, are really the *ātmā*, we are just witnessing the actions. ''We are ever free", should be the approach.

Having said that, we cannot go and murder people and say, ''oh, it is my *ātmā* who did it, what can I do?'' If we know that we are *ātmā* and know that the same *ātmā* is in all, how can we go and hurt others? We should show divinity (compassion) in all our actions. This is *ātma-jñāna*. *Ātma-jñāna* does not mean that whatever I do is because of *ātmā*.

When once the person reaches the state wherein he loses the sense of agency in actions, he is not bound by *pāpa* (evil) or *puṇya* (good) of such actions. The soldier will not be considered as a murderer. And he does not get punished for that act. If the 'I' is dead, no amount of good binds me and no amount of evil can come to me (the real *ātmā*).

It is the ego that accumulates the reactions to actions (*vāsanā*s) and falls into the cycle of *saṁsāra*. The Pure Self does not carry the result of any good or evil actions.

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं परिज्ञाता त्रिविधा कर्मचोदना ।
करणं कर्म कर्तेति त्रिविधः कर्मसंग्रहः ॥१८॥

***jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ parijñātā trividhā karmacodanā* I**
***karaṇaṁ karma karteti trividhaḥ karmasaṁgrahaḥ* II18II**

Knowledge, the knowable and the knower form the three-fold impulse to action. The organs, the action, the agent form the three-fold basis of action.

karmacodanā: Impulse for action.
jñeyam: Knowable.
parijñātā: Knower.
karmasaṅgraha: Basis of action.
karaṇam: Organs of action.

What makes one act? (*karmacodanā*). What makes the basis of action? (*karma-saṅgraha*). One acts forced by desires, temptations or memories. These the Lord puts down as knowledge, the known and the knower.

Knowledge: *jñānam*—memories, experience.
Known: *jñeyam*—temptations experienced.
Knower: *parijñātā*—desire-experiencer.

We are the experiencers of desires. We are the knowers. Around us there are a number of objects we like to enjoy and we like to possess. They are the temptations. They are the ones to be Known. When we get what we are desiring, and experience it, it stays in our memory. It is an experience. It is Knowledge.

We can now understand what is ''impulse to act'', ''what makes us act?'' ''What is *karmacodanā*?'' We act by desires or temptations or by memories (of what we have experienced). In *Vedāntic* terms, these three constitute what is known as *tripuṭī*.

When once the impulse to act has arisen there should be a field to act in. This is *karma-saṅgraha* (basis of action). This is also three-fold. They are:

(1) Instruments—*karaṇam;*
(2) Reaction—*karma;*
(3) Agent—*kartā*—ego (actor).

The ego (*kartā*) because of desires will become the knower (*parijñātā*) and enters the field of activity. The ego has an idea of what to do and what to get to fulfil his desire. This is the reaction to the desire in the form of action and fruits of action. This is *karma.* To do so, he uses his instruments of perception, action, mind and intellect. They are called *karaṇam.*

ज्ञानं कर्म च कर्ता च त्रिधैव गुणभेदतः ।
प्रोच्यते गुणसंख्याने यथावच्छृणु तान्यपि ॥१९॥

***jñānaṁ karma ca kartā ca tridhaiva guṇabhedataḥ* |**
***procyate guṇasaṁkhyāne yathāvac chṛṇu tāny api* ||19||**

Knowledge, action and actor are declared to be three-fold according to the guṇas in Sāṁkhya Śāstras. Hear them as they have been declared.

guṇasaṅkhyāne: In the science of the *guṇas* of *Sāṁkhya-śāstra.*
guṇabhedataḥ: According to the types of *guṇas.*

The Lord now is going to describe each of the three-fold distinctions mentioned in the last verse into the three types of *guṇas* (temperaments). *Guṇas* are temperaments and they have been exhaustively discussed already in chapters 14 and 17.

Kapila Muni is the author of *Sāṁkhya* philosophy. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that He is going to enumerate what has been said in *Sāṁkhya Śāstra.*

सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते ।
अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥२०॥

***sarvabhūteṣu yenaikaṁ bhāvam avyayam īkṣate* |**
***avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi sāttvikam* ||20||**

In all the beings separated into different categories, that *knowledge which sees the One inseparable reality, know that to be* sāttvika jñāna.

vibhakteṣu: In the separated.
avyayam: Indestructible.

Knowledge is *jñānam*. Knowledge can be classified broadly into *sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*. This verse describes the *sāttvika* type of knowledge. *Sāttvika* knowledge, in the science of religion, is recognising the presence of Lord in all. Three attributes are given about the Lord:

(1) He is One, (2) He is Indestructible, (3) He is Indivisible.

Sarvabhūteṣu yenaikam: The 'One' in all beings. The first attribute is to recognise the Lord in all beings. Whatever there be in the universe, moving or non-moving, is manifested because of the presence of the Lord in it.

This is a reminder for those who feel that they are strong and powerful and look down upon others as inferior. If the Lord is 'One' in all, there should not be difference in anybody. It is also a reminder for those who consider themselves as weak and poor. The fact that the God is inside them should make them feel strong. They should develop the inner strength to sustain themselves and do God's work to the best of their ability.

It is also a reminder to those who harm or hurt other beings (verbally, physically) including animals and cruelty to others by such acts. They are actually hurting the Lord in others. *Ahiṁsā*, compassion, sharing with others what one has, should be the spirit in which to live because the Lord is 'One' and is in all.

Avyayam: He is indestructible. The Lord who is the *ātmā* inside all is Indestructible (*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi*..... chapter 2, verse 23) We are all composed of the following five:

Sat, cit, ānanda, nāma and *rūpa*. Name and form change by modifications like death. *Sat, cit* and *ānanda* is the same at all times. Arjuna, in battle is killing only the physical body of the enemy forces. He will not be destroying the Lord (*ātmā*) inside.

Avibhaktam: He is indivisible. Knowledge, the real knowledge means realising that the life-force behind the varied manifestations is indivisible. The Lord is the 'True Knowledge'. The space which appears separate in all pots, is separated because of the physical boundaries of individual pots. The boundaries are divisible and perishable. If all pots are broken, it will be one big space. Space has always been the same, but the objects, because of shape, have made it into separate spaces. The electricity behind all bulbs in indivisible. It has expressed itself as light through the bulb when the power is switched on. The electricity is one indivisible energy.

Similarly, the life-force which activates the five elements makes one feel that we are separate beings, but in reality it is one single force and that is the Lord. It is the five elements that constitute the physical body which make one feel that life is different in all. It is a misconception. The 'Life' which is inside all is 'one' and the 'same'.

Whenever we burn something, it would leave behind ashes. The fire that manifests is life's energy. It is the same in all. Both living and non-living have to end up as five gross elements on disintegration or burning. The energy appeared separate, but it gets united with the universe. We tap energy from different sources in the universe but at the end it will go back as unmanifest energy. This is what is meant by *avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu* (undivided in the divided).

That knowledge which realises this is *sāttvika* knowledge. To see with the inner eye is knowledge. To analyse with our intellect is knowledge. Seeing the ocean in waves is knowledge. Seeing the string holding the flowers together is knowledge. This is *brahma-jñāna*.

To see the object and recognise it from its shape, form and size is *deha-dṛṣṭi*. To see the woman as woman is *deha-dṛṣṭi*. To see the woman as so and so with name is *mano-dṛṣṭi*. To see the woman as mother, sister, daughter is *citta-dṛṣṭi*. To see the Lord in the woman is *ātma-dṛṣṭi*. *Ātma-dṛṣṭi* is real *sāttvika* knowledge. The entire *Vedic* teaching means realising this Ultimate Knowledge. Indirectly this verse answers another important question.

Where is God? God is everywhere and in all and appears to the naked eye as beings separate.

> पृथक्त्वेन तु यज्ज्ञानं नानाभावान्पृथग्विधान् ।
> वेत्ति सर्वेषु भूतेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि राजसम् ।।२१।।
> **pṛthaktvena tu yaj jñānaṁ nānābhāvān pṛthagvidhān |**
> **vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi rājasam ||21||**
>
> *That knowledge which sees in all beings various entities of different kinds as different from one another, know that knowledge as* rājasika.
>
> *pṛthagvidhān*: Of distinct kinds.
> *pṛthaktvena*: As different from one another.

Whereas the *sāttvika* sees 'One' in all, the *rājasika* type sees everything as separate entities. We look upon others as belonging to class 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. We look upon others as women, ignorant, etc. We look upon others as bad people, rich people, etc. All these arise from the *rājasika* type of knowledge. The *rājasika* type not only recognises the manifestations in the universe as separate but treats them also as separate. They do not have universal love for other creatures and beings.

The present unrest in the world is because of this differentiation which the majority of us practise. Our intellect is clouded. Instead of sharing, we are trying to acquire, we are trying to show our physical or intellectual superiority over others. Religious differences and conflicts are due to this differentiation.

> यत्तु कृत्स्नवदेकस्मिन्कार्ये सक्तमहैतुकम् ।
> अतत्त्वार्थवदल्पं च तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ।।२२।।
> **yat tu kṛtsnavad ekasmin kārye saktam ahaitukam |**
> **atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ||22||**
>
> *That knowledge by which, one clings to one thing only as if it were the whole, without reason, without foundation in truth, and trivial, that is declared to be* tāmasika.
>
> *ekasmin kārye*: In one such act.

kṛtsnavat: As all.
ahaitukam: Without any reason.
atattvārthavat: Without foundation in truth.
alpam: Trivial.

A *tāmasika* person clings to one thing or idea only. He considers it to be the real thing and the whole thing. He does not go for reasonable thinking. He has no belief in the foundation of the universe. He gives self-importance to himself. He is narrow-minded.

Suppose he is rich, he considers it to be the only thing. He does not care for others. He gets totally attached to the wealth he has and gets mad and deluded on account of it. He looks upon the entire world as if it were meant for his personal pleasure only. He does not realise the consequences to him at later stage.

Tāmasika knowledge gives importance to the physical body and ignores the divinity inside. The vision of the inner eye is wide and far. One can see more from intellectual insight. But for the *tāmasika,* it is *alpam,* i.e., he sees only as far as his eyes can see and no more.

A *tāmasika* person gets fanatical in his faith and devotion. His reactions are unreasonable (*ahaitukam*). He does not enquire into other's faith and devotion and he behaves unreasonably. ''What I hold and see is right and everything else is wrong'', is his view. So, *tāmasika* knowledge is egocentric and ignorant. His views of the world are perverted and he does not see anything else. It is himself or his religion only, the way he has understood it. He does not listen to anybody else's views.

Rājasika knowledge is a step higher. A *rājasika* person at least sees and recognises others. He looks at qualities of different objects. He unfortunately, by recognising the plurality, loses himself in multiplicity.

Sāttvika knowledge sees oneness in all. He sees only *sat, cit* and *ānanda*.

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम् ।
अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यतत्साात्त्विकमुच्यते ।।२३।।

niyataṁ saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam |
aphalaprepsunā karma yat tat sāttvikam ucyate ||23||

Ordained by the śāstras, *the action, performed by one not desirous of the fruit, without attachment, free from desire and aversion, is called* sāttvika karma.

niyatam: As prescribed by the *śāstras*.
aphala-prepsunā: Not desiring fruits.
arāgadveṣataḥ: Free from desire and aversion.

After describing *jñāna*, the Lord now takes up the theme of *karma* (action). *Karma* again is of three types, *sāttvika*, *rājasika* or *tāmasika*.

The main emphasis of Śrī Kṛṣṇa throughout the *Gītā* is on *karma*. Of course, the Lord has dwelt on other aspects also. His compassion to the universe He has created and the individuals in it, is enormous. For the welfare of the universe, He stresses on the *karma* aspect more than anything else.

The result from any action is always associated with the feeling behind such action. By advocating the *advaita* (non-dual) philosophy, the Lord says action performed with a sense of universal oneness will give the best results. He considers such action as *sāttvika*.

There are a number of people who give their own opinion on any subject, specially on work. They say ''I think that is the way to do it'' or ''do it this way and it is the best''. Some of them may be correct. Usually, there is some sense of personal feeling behind such a statement.

Our *śāstras* were written by sages who had universal love. They were not selfish. They combined their wisdom (beyond *rāga* and *dveṣa*) and produced the *śāstras*. Even Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that whatever He has said has been said before by the sages of the past. He has repeated this assertion several times. So, He starts describing the '*sāttvika* work', by the word '*niyatam*'. Any work ordained by the *śāstras*, if performed, becomes '*sāttvika* work'.

Saṅgarahitam: Such an action should not have the sense of doership. One should do the work for the sake of work and not with attachment to the work. Ego in any activity, reduces its efficiency. ''I did this work'', ''I get the credit for this work'', such feelings should not come to one's mind.

Arāgadveṣataḥ: The actions should be free from desire or hatred. Desire and hatred are due to the sense of 'I'-ness in the work. Working for desire will also bring in the desire to enjoy the results of the work (*phala-prepsunā*). These two will reduce the efficiency of the work. Instead of concentrating on the work, the mind will be agitated with some other thoughts on the future results of present actions. By hating any work and doing it at the same time will certainly not produce any good results.

''Thinking of the pay packet at the end of the month'', ''how is one going to spend it?'', and ''not liking the job one is doing'', these are all fairly common ways of working nowadays. The efficiency is low, productivity is low, or the product will be defective. Our society is going through this phase. We are more interested in spending the money we have earned and trying to pay off the debts we have got into.

Work done: (1) without sense of doership, (2) without love or hatred, (3) without looking for fruits of the work, (4) as per the *śāstra*s, will become divine and it is *sāttvika*. Work then becomes worship. This is the four-way test of the *sāttvika* type of work.

Why should we do work this way? The reason is:

(1) it will purify the mind of existing *vāsanā*s;
(2) it will not accumulate new *vāsanā*s;
(3) it confers real knowledge;
(4) it leads to *mokṣa;*
(5) it results in benefit to the universe;

and it will make the world a happy, peaceful place to live in.

If we take the universe as the body, we can understand it better. We do not love or hate any particular part of the body. We nurse one part of the body that gets injured or hurt, with the same tender, loving care as we nurse anywhere. We, the ego, pervade the entire body and look after it at all times.

Similarly, the Lord pervades the entire universe. We should, as being part of the universe, treat it as ourselves.

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहंकारेण वा पुनः ।
क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ।।२४।।

yat tu kāmepsunā karma sāhaṁkāreṇa vā punaḥ |
kriyate bahulāyāsaṁ tad rājasam udāhṛtam ||24||

That action which is done by one longing for its results, with egotism, or with great effort is considered rājasika.

kāmepsunā: Desiring fruits.
bahulāyāsam: With great effort.

Rājasika actions, instead of having 'oneness', will have 'I'-ness in them. The actions are performed with the mind fixed on the end-result.

One's mind should be set on the road he is driving on, rather than the destination one is going to reach. If the preparations are carried out properly, one will reach the destination without any problems. Less accidents happen on the road if people are not absent-minded and are not in too much of a hurry to reach their destination.

The actions are performed for personal benefits. One wants to gain a particular result. Political leaders are an example of the activists of the *rājasika* type. They put forth great efforts to achieve what they want. They are exhausted when they actually get where they wanted to reach. They are restless most of the time. Their eye is on the reward and they get a sense of pride in having brought the action to a successful end.

Life is not just achieving a particular position. It is achieving peace and purity in oneself and prosperity to the community. This cannot be achieved by *rājasika* actions. They lead to bondage and one gets caught in the whirlpool of *saṁsāra*.

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनपेक्ष्य च पौरुषम् ।
मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते ।।२५।।

anubandhaṁ kṣayaṁ hiṁsām anapekṣya ca pauruṣam |
mohād ārabhyate karma yat tat tāmasam ucyate ||25||

That action which is undertaken from delusion, without regard for the consequence, loss, injury and ability is declared to be tāmasika.

anubandham: Consequence of action.
kṣaya: Loss.
pauruṣam: Ability.
anapekṣya: Without considering.

The goal in one's life is to attain knowledge, achieve purity and peace. This state one experiences on attaining that which is called *mokṣa*. If one forgets his goal in life, he is said to be deluded (*mohāt*). He fixes a different goal for himself but this is brought on by ignorance of one's true nature.

Tāmasika action does not just fix a different goal, it is also undertaken without thinking of its consequences (*anubandham*). The final consequence is failing to achieve *mokṣa* and falling into the cycle of *saṁsāra*. ''Where am I going, what is going to happen to me, what will happen to my dependents'', etc. are not thought of.

Such action will result in loss (*kṣaya*). This loss could be of health, position in society, fame, money, etc. We see examples, so often, of people in high position losing their respect in society by *tāmasika* actions. A moment of indiscretion will ruin one's career. Why do a wrong thing at all? Why suffer from it? Why not think before doing such *tāmasika* work? Ministers have lost their ministerial posts by such acts. Examples of such acts are: (a) gambling, (b) drinking, (c) corruption, etc. These acts result in *hiṁsā*. This is injury to oneself or others.

The person loses his ability to perform his work (*pauruṣa*). A corrupt man is caught in the trap and he cannot perform his work properly. Somebody else will dictate to him what he has to do. So, the Lord's advice is: (1) think who you are; (2) think where you want to go (plan out your life and work at every stage without any distractions); (3) think of all the consequences of your actions.

If one performs any work without considering its consequences (*anubandham*) he will fail to reach the destination. Such acts are then *tāmasika* or *rājasika*.

मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योर्निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते ॥२६॥

muktasaṅgo'nahaṁvādī dhṛtyutsāha-samanvitaḥ I
siddhyasiddhyor nirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyate II26II

An agent who is free from attachment, non-egotistical, endowed with firmness and enthusiasm, and unaffected by success or failure, is called sāttvika.

muktasaṅgaḥ: Freed from attachment.
anahaṁvādī: Without sense of 'I'-ness in what he says.
dhṛtyutsāha-samanvitaḥ: Endowed with firmness and enthusiasm.
nirvikāraḥ: Unaffected.

After describing the knowledge of any action and actions as such, the Lord now proceeds to classify the feeling behind such actions.

The *ātmā* inside each of us is the same. In the game of life, the *ātmā* projects out through the medium of mind and intellect. It uses the sense-organs to associate itself with the outer world. Temporarily, *ātmā* forgets its true nature and becomes the *jīva*. The *jīva* suffers consequences of forgetfulness of his real nature. It is like Jekyll coming out of Hyde.

The agent, with the feeling of agency is a *kartā*. A *sāttvika* agent is one who realises the divinity within. He knows that he is the agent of the Lord within. All his actions will be pure and divine.

The four qualities of the agent are described here:

(1) **Muktasaṅga**: Free from attachment. The *kartā* knowing his true identity, does not have any attachment like 'mine' and 'my people'. He will work with a sense of detachment to the outer world. He will perform his obligatory (*niyata*) duties. He

does not want to be a slave to the pleasures of the world but he wants to be a servant or messenger of the Lord.

(2) **Anahaṁvādī:** The *kartā* does not say "I am the doer", "my family did this, my family got this, I got this etc." His sense of unity is not: (a) his physical body or (b) his family and friends.

His sense of unity is universal ("all is one, the Lord is in all"). He is very near to his *ātmā* and behaves like *ātmā*. He remains only a witness to his actions (at all levels of body, senses and mind). After performing the greatest surgery to cure some patient, the surgeon should realise the power of God behind his ability. The feeling of "I did this great surgery" should not come to him. If he feels so, his future acts will not carry the same efficiency. Pride will take away the efficiency.

(3) **Dhṛtyutsāhasamanvitaḥ:** He carries on his work with determination and enthusiasm. His resolutions become firm when they lose the egotistical feeling. This firmness is *dhṛti*. *Dhṛti* is that faculty which makes one achieve his goal. With this determination one can overcome any obstacles in the path. One gets more courage to fight the battles in life. This *dhṛti*, brings enthusiasm in the field of work and the people surrounding such agent also will get the enthusiasm.

Mahatma Gandhi is an example of this type. He had great determination in achieving freedom for Indians and put all his *utsāha* (enthusiasm) into it. This brought *dhṛti* and *utsāha* to millions of Indians. *Utsāha* brings tireless self-application in the field of work.

(4) **Sidhyasidhyoḥ nirvikāraḥ:** He is unaffected by success or failure in his work. He knows the Lord will be behind his actions. He attributes his failures to some faults in himself. He does not blame anybody for the failures. He will keep on trying to achieve the success. He does not get elated at success.

In a football match, the game lasts 90 minutes. The season lasts nine months. Seasons follow year after year. Scoring a goal in the first few minutes will not make the team winners. Winning a single game does not make them champions. Winning one championship does not make them champions forever. The victory should not bring elation. Elation is likely to make one deluded and future efforts may not bring the same result. Similarly, losing a match should not make one feel depressed. *Dhṛti* and *utsāha* should be constantly present.

What then of doing divine acts and achieving liberation? Instead of asking ''O God, when will I get *mukti*?'' one should put more efforts in achieving it.

A *sāttvika* agent remembers that his body, mind and intellect are instruments to serve the world because his '*ātmā*' is in contact with the world. He constantly remembers *sat, cit and ānanda.*

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचिः ।
हर्षशोकान्वितः कर्ता राजसः परिकीर्तितः ।।२७।।

rāgī karmaphalaprepsur lubdho hiṁsātmako'śuciḥ |
harṣaśokānvitaḥ kartā rājasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ ||27||

Passionate, desirous of the fruits of action, greedy, cruel, impure, moved by elation and despair, such an agent is called rājasika.

karmaphalaprepsu: Desirous of fruits of action.
lubdhaḥ: Greedy.
harṣaśokānvitaḥ: Moved by joy and sorrow.
parikīrtitaḥ: Called.

The features of a *rājasika kartā* are enumerated here. As a matter of fact the majority of us fall in this category. It is up to us to question ourselves and decide if we want to get rid of such characteristics.

Rāgī: *Rājasika kartā* is very passionate in his actions. This is because of his sense of attachment to what he is doing.

One may question as to what sort of feeling should one get in pursuing devotion or meditation on the Lord? Should we not be passionate in our work for God? When one gets passionate in any field, one tends to suffer pains and sorrows in that field. If things go wrong (which happen often), it hurts more if one is very passionate.

The path to realise the Lord is slow, and takes a long time. Who knows how many years we need to burn our *vāsanās*? One cannot keep the same passion for a long time. There will be many obstacles before we realise Him. Who knows how many serious crimes and sins we have committed in the past? The punishment for such acts has to come now or later.

So, it is better not to be very passionate in any field including the spiritual path. Slow and steady and calm composure without deep attachment to the objects is the right way to succeed.

Karmaphalaprepsu: If one is very passionate (*rāgī*), he will be very keen to get the results of his action. He will be longing for the results before the action is completed. The efficiency of the present act will be proportionately reduced (the Lord has emphasised this several times so that we should not forget this important fact).

Lubdha: Because of his previous two qualities, he will be ever greedy. He wants more and more to satisfy his desires.

Planting hybrid crops is an example. To meet the demands and earn more profit, we see farmers planting hybrid seeds and tend to extract more energy from the soil in a short time. One forgets that after a few years that land will not have enough energy left in it. The crops will not be that good. By not spreading the crop in a proper order, by trying to accumulate profit now, the farmer may find more profit initially but later on the yield from that land will be less and the profits will also be less.

The greed to get more out of any person or any object will actually harm the agent in course of time. Greedily eating more foods (because it is so tasty) gives stomach upsets.

Hiṁsātmakaḥ: Because of greed, the *kartā* does not hesitate to hurt others. He hurts his own *ātmā* and the *ātmā* in others. To gain what he wants, he will relentlessly hurt others.

Aśuciḥ: As a result of these, he becomes impure. It means he will accumulate more *vāsanā*s.

Harṣaśokānvitaḥ: Finally, the *kartā* becomes the sufferer of his indiscriminate actions. He find moments of joy and happiness. These in turn bring moments of sorrow and pain. He becomes desperate at times. He loses his sense of balance in his actions and eventually ruins himself and others who depend on him.

Such is the fate of a *rājasika kartā*. Can we correct our *rājasika* qualities? Can we try to be pure? Can we try not to be greedy? Can we try not to hurt others?

अयुक्तः प्राकृतः स्तब्धः शठो नैष्कृतिकोऽलसः ।
विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते ॥२८॥
***ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ* |**
***viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate* ||28||**

One who is unsteady, vulgar, obstinate, cheating, malicious, lazy, despondent, procrastinating, such an agent is said to be tāmasika.

ayuktaḥ: Unsteady.
prākṛtaḥ: Vulgar.
stabdhaḥ: Unbending, immodest, obstinate.
śaṭhaḥ: Cheating.
naiṣkṛtikaḥ: Deceiving others, malicious.
viṣādī: Despondent.
dīrghasūtrī: Procrastinating, taking a long time to finish any work.

The *tāmasika* agent will have *tāmasika* knowledge and his actions will be *tāmasika*. They are due to ignorance of the Truth.

Ayuktaḥ: Because of ignorance of the real nature of the Lord within and all around, his mind is constantly wandering. His concentration is unsteady on any object. He has no control on himself. In contrast, a *yuktaḥ* is one whose mind and concentration are steady. He is bound to succeed in his efforts.

Prākṛtaḥ: His instincts tend to be vulgar. He cannot control his animal instincts. His intellect does not control his mind. He has locked his intellect inside him. He has given free rein to his impulses of *kāma*, *lobha*, etc. He does not know when to stop drinking, when to stop behaving in a vulgar fashion.

Stabdhaḥ: He does not heed the warning of his intellect or of his well-wishers. He is ever obstinate. He will push away anybody who comes near him to help him. In short he is a stubborn man, stubborn in his way of life. He does not want to change his way of life.

Naiṣkṛtikaḥ: His behaviour is malicious. He deceives his own family and ruins life of others. He is a revengeful person. By ruining others' lives, the *tāmasika kartā* actually does not get any benefit to himself. (In contrast, the *rājasika* type of *kartā* ruins others for his own benefit, the *sāttvika kartā* sacrifices his own interest to help others or respects the others' interests and helps them).

Alasaḥ: Such a *kartā* is lazy. He has no zeal. He does not care for what happens next. He is immersed in drowning himself in his passions. He spends his time in over-indulgence. Getting up late in the morning is a sign of *tamas*. By getting up late, a vicious chain of events takes place. One finds he has no time to get ready properly. One does not have proper breakfast. One rushes to the place of work and in a hurry endangers the lives of others. His mind does not have the calm composure on the work he is supposed to do.

Śaṭhaḥ: He cheats. He not only cheats his own self and his family members, he will cheat others also. To cover up his faults at home and at work, he develops the habit of cheating others. He also conceals his real motives in what he is doing.

Viṣādī: He is pessimistic about all he does. He has wasted his energy in over-indulgence. He has no strength to face the challenges of life. He does not shoulder any responsibility at home and work. He develops a habit of complaining. He blames his family members and friends or colleagues at work but never for a moment considers himself worthy of blame.

Dīrghasūtrī: He cannot come to any final decisions. He has no constancy in his application to what he does. His mental indecision is his main weakness. For example, to start a good work, he takes a long time. He gives various excuses for not starting the work. Having started, he does not continue the work. He does not complete the work he has started. At the end, there is no good achieved for himself or others. On the other hand, we have people who are—

(1) *Dīrghadarśī*: Far-sighted; anticipate dangers and prepare steps to overcome them; and

(2) *Prāktakāla jñānī*: They realise dangers on facing them directly and act properly to overcome the danger.

But a *dīrghasūtrī* does not realise the dangers in his actions, and falls into the net and dies.

In short, the *tāmasika* agent loses the battle of life without fighting it at all.

> बुद्धेर्भेदं धृतेश्चैव गुणतस्त्रिविधं श्रृणु ।
> प्रोच्यमानमशेषेण पृथक्त्वेन धनञ्जय ॥२९॥
> **buddher bhedaṁ dhṛteś caiva guṇatas trividhaṁ śṛṇu ।**
> **procyamānam aśeṣena pṛthaktvena dhananjaya ॥29॥**
>
> *Hear O Arjuna, the three-fold division of intellect and firmness according to the* guṇas. *I will declare it to you fully and distinctly.*
>
> *dhṛti*: Firmness.
> *pṛthaktvena*: Distinctly.
> *procyamānam*: Being declared.

So far the Lord has described *jñāna, kartā* and *karaṇa* (knowledge, work and agent). Underlying the above three types, the foundation and fuel are (1) *buddhi,* (2) *dhṛti.*

What is *buddhi*? *Buddhi* is the capacity to grasp what is happening and understanding it. What is *dhṛti*? *Dhṛti* is the capacity to keep an idea in the mind from the beginning to its end. Towards such work, one will put continuous self-application and does not allow his mind to wander away to other fields. An actor on the stage will put his best effort if he remembers his role from the beginning to the end and put forth his efforts toward projecting that image to the audience.

> प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये ।
> बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥३०॥

pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye I
bandhaṁ mokṣaṁ ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī II30II

O Arjuna, that buddhi *which knows what is* pravṛtti *and what is* nivṛtti, *what ought and what ought not to be done, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation, is* sāttvika.

pravṛtti: *Karma-mārga.*
nivṛtti: *Saṁnyāsa-mārga.*

We humans have been blessed with an intellect. The sense-organ send in the impulses to the mind. From impulses received and from its store of memories, the mind has the capacity to send impulses back through the organs of action. This pathway is the same for the humans and the animals. We have an extra capacity. That is, we have the capacity to discriminate; it can also be called understanding or *buddhi*.

The *sāttvika* type of *buddhi* is one which has the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong. It enables the mind to accept its judgement. It does not let indiscriminate actions to be done by the person.

There are actions that are to be pursued. They are called *pravṛtti* actions. There are actions that are to be avoided. They are called *nivṛtti* actions. The *sāttvika buddhi* knows both types of actions and it helps the mind to send proper impulses for such actions. (*Pravṛtti* also means path of action, i.e., *karma-mārga* and *nivṛtti* means path of renunciation or *saṁnyāsa-mārga*). The *sāttvika buddhi* knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done.

Let us take the example of sheep. When they are moving in a flock, if the sheep in front falls down from a cliff, the ones behind just follow the ones in front and they too fall down. They have no capacity to understand what they are doing.

We are prone to various temperaments. Sometime we are extremely angry or mad at a particular situation. During such times our intellect gets clouded. We act indiscriminately and take decisions which we will regret later. "I cannot stand my boss anymore, I will resign now, at this minute" is an impulse many of us have at times. If we were to act on that impulse, we will be actually harming ourselves. If we cool down for a while and let our intellect use its capacity and think of the consequences we would not take any hasty decision. Such capacity of the *buddhi* that tells us what ought to be done is *sāttvika buddhi.*

Arjuna wanted to leave the battlefield and go away to the forest. But later he used his *sāttvika buddhi* and asked for help from his guide, Śrī Kṛṣṇa (his conscience).

Sāttvika buddhi also tells us what is fear and fearlessness (*bhayābhaye*). *Abhayam,* as we have read before, is the main divine quality (chapter 16, verse 1). Fear is the source of evil. We get attached to the objects of the world and we are frightened to lose them. We cling to this world and are frightened to die.

That *buddhi* which corrects our wrong notion of *saṁsāra* is *sāttvika buddhi*. *Sāttvika buddhi* knows what is bondage and knows what happens when we cling to our desires and temptations. It warns us of dangers from such attachments. It also advises us to follow the path of *vairāgya* (dispassion) to worldly objects and leads us in the path to final liberation (*mokṣa*).

Sāttvika buddhi, in other words, is the proper one to follow for achieving 'self-realisation'. It helps us to burn our existing *vāsanā*s and not to accumulate new *vāsanā*s. It acts like a weed killer killing bad instincts in us. It also acts as a nourisher for the intellectual buds to blossom and become beautiful flowers.

यया धर्ममधर्मं च कार्यं चाकार्यमेव च ।
अयथावत्प्रजानाति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ राजसी ॥३१॥

yayā dharmam adharmaṁ ca kāryaṁ cākāryam eva ca |
ayathāvat prajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī ||31||

O Pārtha, that intellect by which one understands erroneously what is dharma *and* adharma, *and also what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, is* rājasika.

Rājasika buddhi is of the passionate type. It has developed a number of likes and dislikes. It has got a number of desires it wants to fulfil. Because of that, it loses its power of right understanding.

To get what it wants and what it likes, *rājasika buddhi* forgets what is good and what is evil. It does not look into *śāstrika* injunctions which explain *dharma* and *adharma*. Fulfilling its own desires is the only *dharma* it knows. This erroneous judgement is called in Sanskrit *ayathāvat*. Because of erroneous judgement, it also wrongly judges what ought to be done and ought not to be done (*kārya, akārya*).

Duryodhana wanted to get the kingdom for himself from his cousins. His father Dhṛtarāṣṭra wanted to see his son rolling in happiness. When Duryodhana refused all offers of mediation by Lord Kṛṣṇa and decided to fight, Dhṛtarāṣṭra did not object to his son's actions. Both father and son judged *Dharma* and *adharma* erroneously and decided to fight. It ought not to have been the decision to take. This is an example of *rājasika buddhi*.

अधर्मं धर्ममिति या मन्यते तमसावृता ।
सर्वार्थान्विपरीतांश्च बुद्धिः सा पार्थ तामसी ॥३२॥

adharmaṁ dharmam iti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā |
sarvārthān viparītāṁś ca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī ||32||

O Pārtha, that intellect which, clouded by tamas, *sees* adharma *as* dharma, *and all things perverted, is* tāmasika.

viparītan: Perverted.

Tāmasika quality is ignorance. The real intellect is covered by a dark band of ignorance. It is like a mirror thickly coated with dust or grease. No, it is like a mirror one sees in fairgrounds. The mirror even though made of glass, is shaped in such a way that it gives distorted reflection of any object. Such an intellect is really not *buddhi*. Instead of discrimination as its capacity, it is full of indiscriminations. All its sense of understanding is of the wrong type.

The *tāmasika* people come to consider evil as good, and good as evil. Scritptures, advice by teachers and elders have no value for such persons. Such persons follow their own way in life and ruin themselves and others. This behaviour is *viparīta* (extreme misunderstanding).

According to such *buddhi*, there is no God. Satisfying the lust of the physical body is considered to be a pleasure. The beauty of the physical body is of great attraction to them rather than the bliss of *ātmā*.

धृत्या यया धारयते मनः प्राणेन्द्रियक्रियाः ।
योगेनाव्यभिचारिण्या धृतिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥३३॥
dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥ prāṇendriyakriyāḥ |
yogenāvyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī ||33||

O Pārtha, that unswerving fortitude which, by yoga, *holds the functions of mind,* prāṇa *and bodily organs is called* sāttvika.

avyabhicāriṇyā: Unswerving.
dhārayate: Holds.

The Lord now describes the three types of *dhṛti* (firmness, fortitude).

Dhṛti (chapter 18, verse 29) is that capacity by which one keeps an idea in the mind constantly till it reaches its logical end. It does not allow any obstacles to come in its way. Constant self-application on the idea is *dhṛti*.

In our daily experiences, we come across men of *dhṛti* in relation to external objects. Tensing and Hilary climbed Mount Everest. How did they do it? By determination and constant self-application. They first of all fixed their goal — they wanted to climb the peak. They then drew an 'action plan'. They practised under severe conditions and found the necessary clothes and equipment they needed. They did not get distracted by any other thoughts. Their family and friends were temporarily pushed back from their minds. They overcame severe weather conditions and achieved their goal.

In the spiritual path, *dhṛti* is not for worldly objects. It is the firmness with which one holds the mind, vital organs, sense-organs and their activities. The mind is the final authority which directs bodily actions. Intellect or *buddhi* of course has the capacity to discriminate. But it is the mind that has to develop *dhṛti*.

As we have constant exposure to worldly objects, to keep the mind firm we need to have a point of contemplation. The *sāttvika* type of *dhṛti* contemplates on True *yoga*. *Yoga* is union of the *jīva* with the *ātmā*. *Sāttvika dhṛti* keeps the goal of union with *Paramātmā* (*yoga*). It holds all sense-organs and vital organs from getting distracted. It even holds the mind from dwelling on its past memories.

It helps to conquer the universe within. The Lord uses the word *avyabhicāreṇa*. It means unswerving. The mind devotes its attention towards the *ātmā* inside and does not swerve from its path. The searchlight is constantly focused on the *ātmā*. This capacity is firm and kept constantly by *sāttvika dhṛti*. Such a mind and *buddhi* can conquer the sense-organs.

यया तु धर्मकामार्थान्धृत्या धारयतेऽर्जुन ।
प्रसङ्गेन फलाकाङ्क्षी धृतिः सा पार्थ राजसी ॥३४॥

***yayā tu dharma-kāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate'rjuna* I**
***prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī* II34II**

O Pārtha, that dhṛti *by which one holds fast to duty, wealth and desire, owing to attachment and craving for the fruits of action, is* rājasika.

prasaṅgena: With great attachment

The aim of human life, according to the *śāstras*, is fourfold:

(1) *dharma*: Duty
(2) *artha*: Wealth
(3) *kāma*: Desires.
(4) *mokṣa*: Liberation.

Dharma: We all have a duty to perform to ourselves, our family and the universe.

Artha: We have to earn to look after ourselves and our dependents. Our wealth may be material, spiritual, intellectual, etc.

Kāma: We have desires to fulfil.

Mokṣa: We have to aim at liberation from bondage.

For this final aim, we need *dhṛti* or determination. For *rājasika dhṛti*, *mokṣa* is not the aim. A *rājasika* person being passionate, holds firmly to his desires and strives for fulfilling such desires. He follows *dharma* to obtain personal rewards. He accumulates wealth to get power in this life. He uses the wealth to gratify his desires and find satisfaction in it.

Prasaṅgena means strong attachment. *Rājasika dhṛti* is for *prasaṅga* to the fruits of action. A *rājasika* person is always wanting to obtain this or that from his actions. He is always longing strongly for the results of his actions. Alas, he finds no *dhṛti* for spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*).

यया स्वप्नं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमेव च ।
न विमुञ्चति दुर्मेधा धृतिः सा पार्थ तामसी ॥३५॥

yayā svapnaṁ bhayaṁ śokaṁ viṣādaṁ madam eva ca |
na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī ||35||

O Pārtha, because of which a stupid man holds on to sleep, fear, grief, despair, arrogance, that dhṛti *is* tāmasika.

durmedhā: Stupid man.
viṣādam: Despair.
madam: Arrogance.
vimuñcati: Abandons.

When one misuses his intelligence, he will ruin himself and others. The Lord calls such men *durmedhā*. He says that such a person is stupid. He gives five characteristics of a stupid person. Such person's firmness is not strong and it ruins him. It produces evil effects.

Svapna: *Svapna* is dream. Dream is a state before deep sleep. Our mind throws up fancied imaginations in which we live for a while before we go to sleep. We involuntarily associate ourselves with the events of such imaginations. We kick our arms and legs in the dream-state and are not aware of it. We are fighting someone in the dream but are not aware of it. The *tāmasika* person projects these dreams in his wakeful state also. He projects his own imaginary values on to his surroundings, lives in false joy and strives to gain such pleasures.

Bhaya: His dream-like projections, bring in fear; to overcome the fear, he ends up projecting some more fancied imaginations. He gets himself caught in delusion. He gets drunk with his passions and loses the power of discrimination.

Śoka, viṣāda and mada: These three, if actually understood, give a beautiful meaning. What do they mean?

Śoka is grief. Grief is for some disappointment at something that happened before. It is past. *Viṣāda* is despair. Despair is for something that is regarding the future. It is the future uncertainty. *Mada* is the arrogance with which one lives in the present. Living a life of cheating oneself is conceit. One cannot cheat one's *ātmā*.

Grief over the past and despair of the future make one live a conceited life (at present). One tries to project a false value for the present and lives in a dream-world. Such a person is stupid. One has to forget the past, hope for the best in the future and work now for making the future better. One has to face the present and act according to the *śāstra*s. One should follow *dharma*. This brings success in the end.

Determination or *dhṛti* is to achieve the final goal. It is not for enjoying the present.

सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं शृणु मे भरतर्षभ ।
अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति ॥३६॥

sukhaṁ tv idānīṁ trividhaṁ śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha |
abhyāsād ramate yatra duḥkhāntaṁ ca nigacchati ||36||

O Arjuna, now hear from Me, of the three-fold pleasure, in which one finds delight by practice and attains the end of pain.

ramate: Enjoy
idānīm: Now.
nigacchati: Attains.

The Lord is trying to describe what the impulse is of all actions. So far He has described the knowledge, known and the knower and *buddhi* and *dhṛti*. These five can be considered as describing the anatomy and physiology of work. They are the preliminary and most important aspects of work. These explain the method of working. Why does man work ? Every man works to achieve a goal. What is the purpose of working? This is, in other words, an inquiry into the psychology of work.

From time immemorial, man has been trying to attain something. What is it? From birth till old age everyone gets to experience happiness of some sort or other (during sometime of their life span). Happiness is a pleasurable experience. But all states of happiness are short-lived. Happiness is a relative state of experience in our life. All states of happiness do end in sorrow. Again all states of sorrow also do end sooner or later. The pain of sorrow seems to last longer in comparison to the state of happiness. We forget happiness rather quickly.

Birth, in its turn, leads to a life in this world which, we know, is not all happiness. A child falls several times and gets hurt. A child gets ill and it hurts. Parenthood hurts at times and gives happiness at times.

Our ancient *ṛṣis* have analysed this aspect of the human mind. They found that the real state of happiness is experienced when once one knows his true nature. It does not come from outside but it comes from 'within'. True happiness is a state of contentment. It is called *ānanda*. Knowing that we are not the body but the Lord inside and the body is the agent of the Lord, brings happiness. Making the mind pure and avoiding desires bring happiness. Death, disease and ill fame, do not bring pain when one experiences the *ānanda*.

The Lord says that *sukha* is also of three types, depending on what one is looking for in life. *Sāttvika sukha* comes only when the mind is pure. To be pure, one needs to develop the twenty-six divine virtues, and one should be able to kill his ego. By constantly reminding one of one's true nature (*ātmā*) one can overcome the impurities of the mind.

All this comes by *abhyāsa*. It needs practice. Such a state of happiness, acquired by practice, which clears the mind of impurities is *sāttvika*. True happiness is *paramānanda* (ecstasy of joy on seeing the Lord in oneself).

यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।
तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् ॥३७॥
yat tad agre viṣam iva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam |
tat sukhaṁ sāttvikaṁ proktam ātmabuddhi-prasādajam ||37||

That pleasure which is like poison at first but in the end is like nectar, born of purity of one's own mind, due to Self-realisation, is declared to be sāttvika.

prasādajam: Born of purity.

Continuing the theme of the last verse, the Lord states what is *sāttvika* happiness. He has said *abhyāsa* is needed to achieve happiness. The practice one puts in to purify one's mind is *sāttvika abhyāsa*.

Our minds are full of *vāsanā*s from many births. Suppressing the *vāsanā*s will not purify one's mind. The thought-imprints of past desires have to be burnt out. One has to perform the duties without looking for fruits of action. Once the idea of Self-realisation comes, once the thought of purification of mind comes, then it is easy to go on the path to attain *mokṣa*.

All the divine virtues need practice to develop. To kill one's ego requires practice. All the practices are hard in the beginning. They appear like poison (*viṣam iva*) at first. Actually they are not poison at all. They do give nectar at the end.

When we were children, to learn alphabets and numerals, we all have struggled a lot. We hated repeatedly writing the alphabet. What did we get from that habit? We learnt to communicate with society. Life would have been extremely hard if we did not learn our alphabet and numerals.

Most of the medicines the doctor gives us when we are ill, are actually bitter. They do not taste nice at all. Children spit out the medicine many times. What happens when we take them as per directions? Generally, we get better. To attain Self-realisation, one has to practise self-denial which appears like poison at first.

Let us take another example. Student life is a very hard life. That is the time one has the least responsibilities. One is supported by parents and society to obtain education. Pleasures of the outside world start coming in at that time. By the constant habit of getting up on time, going to school and college, by doing home-work, by revising what has been taught, one comes out in flying colours into society as a graduate. We all hate to get up early. We all hated going to school in the beginning. We all hated revising our subjects. But look at the results of those who overcome their initial reluctance? Look at the fruits of self-denial.

Such denial should come from purity of one's mind (*ātmabuddhi-prasādajam*). *Sāttvika* life, discipline, and self control give a state of tranquillity of mind. This understanding (*buddhi*) of the Self (*ātmā*) gives inner tranquillity of the *sāttvika* type. This is *prasāda. Prasāda* is the result of what one gets from his efforts. Passing exams is a *prasāda.* One gets it by one's efforts.

We all go to the temple. We take some fruits to offer to the deity at the temple. The priest offers the fruits to the deity and gives them back to the devotees. During the time spent at the temple, one gets a state of tranquillity. The mere presence of the deity, the serene atmosphere, gives peace. The *prasādam* which one gets is a symbol of tranquillity. We regard that *prasādam* as God's grace on us. We feel that God has blessed us and we hope to retain that peace of mind.

The joy arising out of spiritual discipline, the joy experienced by the mind and intellect, the peace and tranquillity one experiences are the 'true *prasāda*' for our efforts. This is what is meant by *ātma-buddhi-prasādajam*. This *sukham* is the *prasāda.*

In *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, Maharshi Vasiṣṭha says that freedom from sorrow and suffering is not to be found anywhere in this world. It is directly present inside one's *buddhi*. It is the experience when the mind is purified.

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥३८॥

viṣayendriyasaṁyogād yat tad agre'mṛtopamam |
pariṇāme viṣam iva tat sukhaṁ rājasaṁ smṛtam ||38||

That pleasure arising from contact of the sense-organs with the objects, which is like nectar at first but in effect is like poison, is declared to be rājasika.

In contrast to *sāttvika sukha*, wherein the *sukha* is like poison at first, *rājasika sukha* is like nectar (*amṛtopamam*) at first. It is not nectar which one gets with *sāttvika sukha*. It is like slow poison which kills the person eventually. We all know that the pleasures when the sense-object get in contact with our sense-organs are not constant and also not permanent. It depends on conditions at the time of contact.

Let us take the example of kings in olden days. Alexander the Great wanted to spread his kingdom far and wide. Initially he enjoyed the success very much; it was like nectar. What happened later? In the process of acquiring more land, his soldiers got tired, they were homesick. They died because of injury and illness in newly acquired kingdoms. Gradually, before he could return home, Alexander died. The last years of his life were certainly not like nectar.

In the present-day, we find people going in for momentary pleasures (sensual, material, etc). To please the loved ones, they start stretching beyond their limits and eventually get into trouble. To control when one has had enough of the pleasure is hard in the *rājasika* type of personality. The *rājasika* mentality goes on for pleasure after pleasure. It is this craving for constant fulfilment of desires that ruins the person eventually.

As soon as one gets to experience happiness on obtaining something nice, the person develops anxiety to preserve what he has got. His sense of *yoga* (to unite with what he likes) and *kṣema* (to look after what he has got) is for external objects. He is caught in the cycle of *saṁsāra* and suffers for such an act.

यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः ।
निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥३९॥

yad agre cānubandhe ca sukhaṁ mohanam ātmanaḥ |
nidrālasyapramādotthaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ||39||

That pleasure which arising from sleep, idleness and heedlessness causes delusion during its enjoyment and in sequel, is said to be tāmasika.

nidrā: Sleep.
ālasya: Lethargy.
pramāda: Heedlessness.
anubandhe: In sequel.

Tamas is ignorance. It clouds one's intellect. It hides his spiritual personality. It arises from the following:

(1) **Nidrā**: (Sleep). During the state of sleep in our daily life, we lose contact with the outer world. We are ignorant of our surroundings at that time. People have died in sleep, due to various mishaps (collapse of building, bitten by poisonous insects, murdered by vicious people). Thieves rob the house when everybody is asleep.

This comparison is given of *tāmasika* character, in relation to spiritual life. The *tāmasika* character is ignorant of the surroundings. One loses contact with the inner world of the *ātman*. The sense-pleasures cause delusion (*mohāt*) and we forget our *ātman*. Sense-pleasures rob us of our divine nature. We become poor in respect of divine virtues. We start losing whatever divine virtues we may have.

During such states of sleep, we lose the capacity to perceive the permanent happiness of the *sāttvika* type.

Ālasya: (Indolence). Delay in reactions to the dangers is *ālasya*. Before we realise there is a pit, we fall into it. One becomes lazy and loses the capacity to look ahead of him. The person loses his capacity to think of the problem and to come to correct judgement to overcome it. In simple words, whatever he does is 'too late'.

Pramāda: (Heedlessness). One does not respond to warnings of danger and actually suppresses such warnings. He shuts his sense-organs and mind against the warnings given by his intellect.

If a child goes near the fire, the mother warns her not to go near it. The mother knows it is dangerous. The child does not know. Sometimes the child does not pay heed to the warning given by her mother and gets burnt.

In all of us, there is divinity. It does warn us of the dangers we face. But due to the ego and the *vāsanā*s, we do not take notice of it. In the course of time it gets suppressed totally and loses total contact with the divine.

Sense-pleasures cause delusion in the beginning. When we are enjoying such pleasures, we are deluded of our inner divine nature. They make us fall into the pit by the feeling of pleasures we get. We get totally deluded and stay in a state of delusion.

A drunken man gets deluded after drinking a few pints of wine/beer. He loses his capacity of discrimination. His sense of proportion changes. He forgets his position and status and behaves in a ridiculous manner. He enters into a state of drunkenness and loses his consciousness. He cannot recognise the dangers to himself and others.

Tāmasika happiness deludes the Soul in the beginning and in the end. Such a person, due to *nidrā, ālasya* and *pramāda,* does not take warnings from the divine *ātmā* inside.

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ।।४०।।

***na tad asti pṛthivyāṁ vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ* I**
***sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ* II40II**

There is no being on earth or in heaven among the devas, *who is free from the three* guṇas *arising from* prakṛti.

prakṛtijair: Born of *prakṛti.*

यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः ।
निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥३९॥

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Ālasya: (Indolence). Delay in reactions to the dangers is *ālasya*. Before we realise there is a pit, we fall into it. One becomes lazy and loses the capacity to look ahead of him. The person loses his capacity to think of the problem and to come to correct judgement to overcome it. In simple words, whatever he does is 'too late'.

Pramāda: (Heedlessness). One does not respond to warnings of danger and actually suppresses such warnings. He shuts his sense-organs and mind against the warnings given by his intellect.

If a child goes near the fire, the mother warns her not to go near it. The mother knows it is dangerous. The child does not know. Sometimes the child does not pay heed to the warning given by her mother and gets burnt.

In all of us, there is divinity. It does warn us of the dangers we face. But due to the ego and the *vāsanā*s, we do not take notice of it. In the course of time it gets suppressed totally and loses total contact with the divine.

Sense-pleasures cause delusion in the beginning. When we are enjoying such pleasures, we are deluded of our inner divine nature. They make us fall into the pit by the feeling of pleasures we get. We get totally deluded and stay in a state of delusion.

A drunken man gets deluded after drinking a few pints of wine/beer. He loses his capacity of discrimination. His sense of proportion changes. He forgets his position and status and behaves in a ridiculous manner. He enters into a state of drunkenness and loses his consciousness. He cannot recognise the dangers to himself and others.

Tāmasika happiness deludes the Soul in the beginning and in the end. Such a person, due to *nidrā, ālasya* and *pramāda,* does not take warnings from the divine *ātmā* inside.

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ॥४०॥

***na tad asti pṛthivyāṁ vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ* I**
***sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ* II40II**

There is no being on earth or in heaven among the devas, *who is free from the three* guṇas *arising from* prakṛti.

prakṛtijair: Born of *prakṛti.*

After having described in detail the "impulse of action" at anatomical, physiological and psychological levels, the Lord makes the concluding remarks on *karma*. All our actions are due to our *guṇa*s. The way we behave is due to our *guṇa*s. The proportion of *guṇas* in each of us varies according to our *saṁskāra*s (*vāsanā*s). The entire *prakṛti* is the repository of the three *guṇa*s; together they constitute what is called *māyā*. Nobody on earth or in heaven can escape from the clutches of the three *guṇa*s.

The Lord is propounding the *advaita* doctrine in this verse. He says there is no such thing as heaven and gods. Due to *prakṛti* one gets the inherent *guṇa*s he exhibits in his life. We consider heaven as a place where gods abide. We consider them to be enjoying the pleasures of heaven. We consider it as a place where there is no disease or poverty.

Such a heaven is in this world itself. It consists of those people who are enjoying such pleasures. None of such pleasures are permanent. Hence, heaven is not a permanent place to reach. There are no two entities such as me and heaven. There is only 'Me', the Lord inside.

Such a person who has transcended life consisting of the three *guṇa*s is a *jīvanmukta*. The *jīva* has become free.

ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परंतप ।
कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः ॥४१॥

***brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca parantapa* I**
***karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāvaprabhavair guṇaiḥ* II41II**

O Parantapa; the duties for the different castes, brāhmaṇas kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras are determined according to their nature born of prakṛti.

svabhāva: Nature.
prabhavaiḥ: Born of.
pravibhaktāni: Separately determined.

In chapter 4, verse 13, the Lord has said that the four castes are determined by the qualities in men (*cāturvarṇyam māyā....*). He has reiterated the same statement here.

The nature of any person is known as *svabhāva.* This nature is determined by the *guṇa*s. The *guṇa*s are determined by the *vāsanā*s. The *vāsanā*s are unfulfilled thoughts (desires) of the past.

The *jīva* (ego) identifying itself with the world develops likes and dislikes. Desires mount in him. Actions result out of the desires. Actions result in reactions and more desires accumulate. Thoughts of the *jīva* which become desire, become one's *svabhāva.*

Depending on the preponderance of any one type of *guṇa,* the individual develops certain characteristics. These characteristics are used to classify the entire mankind into four categories.

In olden days, trades were classified according to the characteristics. They are of four types:

(1) Brāhmaṇas, (2) kṣatriyas, (3) vaiśyas, (4) śudras.

Brāhmaṇas are those with a preponderance of *sattva-guṇa.* Kṣatriyas are those with a preponderance of *rajo-guṇa.* Vaiśyas are those with a predominance of *rajas* and less of *tamas* and a little of *sattva.* Śūdras are those with predominantly *tāmasika* qualities.

In the present world, brāhmaṇas are thinkers, kṣatriyas are politicians, vaiśyas are traders and śūdras are labourers. This classification is termed as caste system. It is not a hereditary classification. Unfortunately, somewhere in the process in the past, some people represented this classification differently. This has caused a major problem at present in India. People have claimed hereditary birthright to inherit the title of these four classifications. Mere physical birth is said to be the reason for calling a person brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra. Birthright should really be according to the birth of *guṇa*s from the past *saṁskāra*s. Nọ one has a right to say he is a brāhmaṇa by birth or a śūdra by right.

From verse 15 to 39, the Lord has enumerated the three types of *guṇa*s in a man's action (*karma*). Ego (*karaṇam*), *jñānam* (knowledge), *buddhi*, *dhṛti* and *sukham*, these determine the caste or *varṇa* of any person. The accident of one's birth into any family has nothing to do with a person's right to acquire spiritual knowledge.

शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिरार्जवमेव च ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजम् ॥४२॥

śamo damas tapaḥ śaucaṁ kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca |
jñānaṁ vijñānam āstikyaṁ brahmakarma svabhāvajam ||42||

Control of internal and external organs, austerity, purity, forgiveness, uprighteousness, knowledge, wisdom, faith in God—are the qualities of the brāhmaṇas born of own nature.

śamaḥ: Self-control.
damaḥ: Control of body.
kṣānti: Forgiveness.
ārjavam: Uprighteousness.
āstikya: Faith in God.

Nine essential qualities which are suggestive of *sāttvika* nature in the person are mentioned by the Lord. The Lord says that those nine are the duties of brāhmaṇas. One should note that the Lord ends the verse with the word ''*brahmakarma-svabhāvajaṃ*''. It means that they are the duties of a *brāhmaṇa* and they are born of their own nature. They are due to the *guṇa*s they are born with. These qualities in a person determine the nature of a brāhmaṇa. It is a birthright to be a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra.

At this juncture, it is necessary to look into the times when this was written. It was written about 5000 years ago. We know that there were no universities at that time. There were no facilities to print any material. The teaching method was totally different. Teaching mainly started at home and ended at home. A few children had the chance to go to the house of the teacher. They stayed there during the early part of their life and learnt from the teacher. It was Gurukula *āśrama*.

This method of education was restricted to brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas. The teacher taught in full all *śāstra*s to his young students. The students therefore were geared to rule the country righteously or to guide the rulers towards running their kingdom righteously.

The rest of the children stayed at home and learnt the craft of their parents. It was a direct practical teaching. This tended to be passed on from generation to generation. We therefore had qualities of businessmen, jewellers, potters, etc.

We cannot do so nowadays. We go to learn at schools and colleges. Our learning depends upon our nature and our aptitude. We cannot declare our caste and profession by birth. It can only be in name but it does not mean the person possesses the characteristics of that particular caste.

The nine essential duties are characteristics of the nature of a brāhmaṇa. Of these *damaḥ*, *tapaḥ*, *śaucham, ārjavam, kṣamā* (*kṣānti*) have been discussed before (chapter 16, verses 1, 2, 3 & 4, characteristics of *daivīsampad*).

Śama: It means self-control. *Dama* is control of external organs of the body. Just not looking at a sensual object does not make the person pure. To be pure one must not even think of sensual objects. This control of the mind is *Śama*. To control the mind diving into the past memories (temptations) is *śama*. The temptations can forcibly take the person away from his path towards Self-realisation. A brāhmaṇa is one who has control of his mind at all times.

Tapaḥ: The austerity of the three types mentioned in chapter 17 (verses 14, 15 & 16) is the duty of the brāhmaṇas. The practice of *śama*, *dama*, *tapa*s, *śauca*, *kṣānti* and *ārjavam* make up the picture of a brāhmaṇa. He should express them in all his relationships with the world and that is his duty as a brāhmaṇa. Apart from these, three more duties are described.

(1) **Jñāna**: Knowledge of the world and knowledge of the Self, together constitute the *jñāna*. Such knowledge will help a brāhmaṇa to teach or advise others. If he is totally ignorant of the outer world, he cannot teach properly. He should be able to talk about the dangers of sense-organs coming in contact with the outer world (i.e., desires).

(2) **Vijñāna**: Wisdom is direct experience of what is learnt. Direct experience makes one a better person. By enthusiastically living in the true knowledge gained by one's studies and from the field of experiences in one's life, one becomes a man of wisdom (*vijñānī*).

(3) **Āstikya**: Faith in the Lord, faith in the belief that *ātmā* is inside everything in this universe, is an essential character a brāhmaṇa must possess. It is his duty to respect the Lord inside himself and inside others. The conviction that the Lord is everywhere, makes the brāhmaṇa live a pure life. The brāhmaṇa should also have faith in his *guru* and scriptures. By *jñāna* and *vijñāna*, his faith in the scriptures must grow.

In brief, a brāhmaṇa is one who has *sāttvika guṇa*s predominant in him. He has developed divine qualities. In course of time, he can become a *jīvanmukta*. He does not attain *mokṣa* by being born as a brāhmaṇa but attains *mokṣa* by practising divine qualities. He is born with divine *guṇa*s and develops maturity of those *guṇa*s.

शौर्यं तेजो धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनम् ।
दानमीश्वरभावश्च क्षात्रं कर्म स्वभावजम् ।।४३।।

śauryaṁ tejo dhṛtir dākṣyaṁ yuddhe cāpy apalāyanam |
dānam īśvarabhāvaś ca kṣātraṁ karma svabhāvajam ||43||

Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, not running away from battle, generosity, lordliness — these are the duties of Kṣatriyas, born of their nature.

śaurya: Prowess.
tejas: Splendour.
dākṣyam: Dexterity.
īśvara-bhāvaśca: Lordliness.

Seven functions of a kṣatriya are enumerated in this verse. It is mentioned again that these are born of their own nature and not by birth. Let us take these functions in the context of a king first. Kṣatriyas are those that belonged to the royal families. Kings and their family ruled in the olden days.

Śaurya: It means prowess. The more strength the king possessed, the more powerful he would be. He faced the battles with courage. He protected his kingdom and also expanded his kingdom by his *śaurya*.

Tejas: The *śaurya* gave him a look of splendour. It is a majestic look and majestic behaviour. The kings like Rāma, by ruling according to *dharma,* exhibited their splendour. They have remained a shining example even after thousands of years (splendour or *tejas* is not an easy word to define).

Dhṛtiḥ: The kings had to be firm in their decisions. Having decided to fight somebody, the king would pursue the path to its end. This firmness is *dhṛti*. He would plan his battle action. He would discuss with his ministers. He would consult his commanders. He would use the secret agents. He would then come to a decision whether to fight or not to fight. He will then execute the plan and will be prepared to win or die on the battle-field. The king will also be firm in his decision-making in ruling his kingdom. He is firm as a supreme court judge.

Dākṣyam: It means dexterity. He is constantly alert. He plans and executes his decisions with dexterity. Alexander the Great showed this dexterity in expanding his kingdom.

Apalāyanam: Not running away from the battle-field is an essential duty of a kṣatriya. He does not abandon his work in the middle. He fights to win or is prepared to die. This he does using his *dhṛti* and *dākṣya*.

Dānam: The king is required to be generous. In times of hardship faced by his subjects, he should be generous in his taxation policy. He should encourage spiritual and educational institutions. He should try to wipe out poverty and diseases by his generosity. His subjects would love him for his deeds and would be behind him to support him always.

Lordliness: (*Īśvara-bhāva*). The king should be able to lead others with self-confidence. Faith in himself will help him to command. *Īśvara* is the ruler over all senses. The king should be able to rule over all his ministers and commanders. If he is weak, one of them may usurp the throne.

Now, let us take this verse in a different sense. A real kṣatriya is a true man-of-action. He is one who has cultivated, maintained and expressed these seven qualities. In short, all of us can be true kṣatriyas.

Śauryam: We must be bold in meeting the challenges of life. By doing so, we will acquire *tejas* (vigour). This is particularly true in our path to Self-realisation. The more firm we are in challenging the undivine qualities, the more *tejas* we will exhibit. Swami Vivekananda is an example, his *tejas* shines even now.

Dākṣyam: We must be at 'attention' in all our life's challenges. We must be vigilant. When we take a decision we must execute it properly. Whatever the obstacle we face, perseverance will help us to overcome the obstacles.

Yuddhe cāpi apalāyanam: We must not run away from the battle of life. In life, we have to plan thoroughly what we want to do with our life. We should have an aim. Without an aim, life is not worth-living. We come across competition in our path. So many individuals and forces within, challenge us in our path. They come in a horde to oppose our planned scheme.

We should be kṣatriyas and should not run away. We will end up as failures if we run away. It is not only us who suffer but our dependents also will suffer.

In our battle of life, if our aim is to attain *mokṣa*, the "forces" needed are within our mind. Divine and undivine forces are in each one of us. We have to gather and sharpen all our divine forces. We have to acquire more divine forces. We must collect all the twenty-six divine forces. We can easily overcome the enemy (undivine forces).

We should not say that we cannot attain *mokṣa*. We should not say we are not fit to attain *mokṣa*. We are all on our own in our battle of life. We have only one constant supporter and guide with us. That is our conscience (the *ātmā* in us). We should get the strength in knowing that the guard (guide) will not desert us. It is up to us to attain the freedom by controlling our senses and mind or to be slaves of our senses.

We should, like a kṣatriya, never leave the battlefield. We should win the battle and be fit to receive the crown of success. We should be like Arjuna. In moments of despair we should ask for spiritual guidance from the Lord inside us. We should obtain the guidance of *gurus*, elders and scriptures.

Dānam: We should be like kṣatriyas and be compassionate to others who need help. It could be *dānam* of any type of wealth (money, knowledge, food, kindness) we possess. We can wear the crown of glory by our attitude to charity. Our attitude to charity will influence our family and good friends. We can pass on that good habit to them.

Īśvara-bhāva: With self-confidence and ability in ourselves, we can be kṣatriyas and lead others. If we want our family and our community to prosper in the spiritual path of *dharma*, we must express this Lordliness. Swami Vivekananda acquired this *Īśvara-bhāva* and there are a number of *Vivekaānanda-Āśrama*s all over the world.

We all, in short, need the *dharma* of a kṣatriya to remain firm in our belief. We should be bold to fight evil and ignorance. We should not relax in our efforts. We should not despair. In the army, the commanding word is ''march on''. Likewise, we should march on in our battle of life. We need the light of knowledge of a brāhmaṇa and the sword of a kṣatriya to drive out darkness and ignorance in ourselves and of those who depend on us.

कृषिगोरक्ष्यवाणिज्यं वैश्यकर्म स्वभावजम् ।
परिचर्यात्मकं कर्म शूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजम् ॥४४॥

***kṛṣi-gorakṣya-vāṇijyaṁ vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam* I**
***paricaryātmakaṁ karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam* II44II**

Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of a vaiśya, born of his nature. Service is the duty of the śūdras.

kṛṣi: Agriculture.
gorakṣya: Cattle-rearing.
vāṇijyam: Trade.

Society needs all types of men and women. We need scientists, politicians, religious leaders, businessmen and labourers. A king cannot be a road sweeper on two counts. He will be wasting his power, which is, to rule, and he will be going against his own nature. His instinct cannot just do the road sweeping. Similarly, the road sweeper cannot be a king.

Both the characters come from the inherent nature of the person and the personality one develops. This means that a person occupies a particular position because of the person's nature and not because one is born in certain caste.

If a man who is fit to work in a particular field because of his temperament is entrusted with other types of work, he will fail in that new field. Everybody has to work to achieve success. Success is brought about by sheer total effort. This will not be possible if the temperament does not suit the job. Success brings prosperity to the community and nation.

A vaiśya is one with an aptitude to business. He evaluates the profit and loss in any business activity. Successful business attracts many and brings revenue to the country. If a man of vaiśya temperament becomes a minister, he will be looking for personal gains and will be called corrupt, and he will be an unfit man to hold the post.

A śūdra is one who has not got the aptitude for business. He does not have the prowess of a kṣatriya, nor the knowledge of the *śāstra*s like a brāhmaṇa. He can still be a useful member of society if he works in the field of his ability. He can be a factory worker, farm labourer or a roade sweeper.

All these positions are meant to burn our existing desires (*vāsanā*s). If we take any other field of work alien to our *svabhāva,* we will not burn our *vāsanā*s. We will on the other hand accumulate more *vāsanā*s.

Arjuna, could not have survived as a *saṁnyāsī* even for a day. His warrior instinct would make him develop those qualities in the new position he wanted to take. A *saṁnyāsī* should not have a warrior instinct in him.

If we work with the sense that 'work is worship', if we work in accordance with our own nature, we will not only get suitable reward but we will make our society better suited for our future generation.

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।
स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥४५॥

***sve sve karmaṇya abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ* I**
***svakarmanirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chṛṇu* II45II**

Devoted, each to his own duty, man attains perfection. How, engaged in his own duty, he attains perfection, listen.

sve sve karmaṇi: One's own duty.
abhirataḥ: Devoted.
svakarmanirataḥ: Engaged in one's own duty.
vindati: Finds.

Sve sve karmaṇyabhirataḥ: This sentence is extremely important. It means devoted to one's own duty. What is one's own duty? It is the duty born of one's own nature. It is the duty ordered by one's own existing *vāsanā*s. It is the basis of work for men/women all over the world. This four-fold classification viz., brāhmaṇas, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra is the classification according to the capacity of the person's nature. It includes physical capacity, psychological development and aptitude of the person for the job. This classification helps to build a prosperous, cultured community. Not only should one do his duty, it should also be a devoted, dedicated duty. One should put all his best efforts in what he is supposed to do.

By this *svakarmanirataḥ* (engaged in one's own duty) man attains *saṁsiddhi* (perfection). This is the secret of *karma-yoga* (chapter 3).

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥४६॥

***yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṁ yena sarvam idaṁ tatam* I**
***svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ* II46II**

He from whom is the manifestation of beings, by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him by performing one's own duty, man attains perfection.

nature. His instinct cannot just do the road sweeping. Similarly, the road sweeper cannot be a king.

Both the characters come from the inherent nature of the person and the personality one develops. This means that a person occupies a particular position because of the person's nature and not because one is born in certain caste.

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If we work with the sense that 'work is worship', if we work in accordance with our own nature, we will not only get suitable reward but we will make our society better suited for our future generation.

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।
स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥४५॥

sve sve karmaṇya abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ I
svakarmanirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chṛṇu II45II

Devoted, each to his own duty, man attains perfection. How, engaged in his own duty, he attains perfection, listen.

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yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṁ yena sarvam idaṁ tatam I
svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ II46II

He from whom is the manifestation of beings, by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him by performing one's own duty, man attains perfection.

yataḥ: From whom.
pravṛttiḥ: Manifestation.
yena: By whom.
abhyarcya: Worshipping.

In the last verse, after describing the duties of people of each caste, the Lord said that by performing their own duty, people attain perfection and realise the Truth.

Now, He is going to explain how one attains perfection while devotedly performing one's own duty.

All of us work for different goals in life. Most of our goals are towards achieving material possessions. We work so that we can feed and clothe ourselves and our dependents. We work to acquire houses and land. We work to increase our wealth. We work to get our children educated and stand on their own feet. Some work to get fame.

Really speaking, our goal in life, from the work we perform, should be to realise *Paramātmā*. All dedicated works in such a spirit will still get us the above benefits. How? One may ask. By selfless work, by not looking for fruits of work, by sincere *karma-yoga*, one will be able to put in complete efficiency in his work. Efficiency brings its due rewards. The two qualities of *Paramātmā* are enumerated here:

(1) **Yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām**: From whom all beings are manifest. *Paramātmā* + gross elements = Life. Life minus *Paramātmā* = gross elements, that is, death. The vital factor that animates the life, that makes us as living beings, is *Paramātmā*. He vitalises the gross elements. The beings carry on work only when alive. When one realises this Truth, one should show his adoration to the Creator.

Workers usually show respect to the boss in their place of work. The respect shown is more when the boss looks after their welfare in a loving manner. When the boss really cares for his workers, the workers respect him much more.

Similarly, should we not show respect to Him who created us and who is looking after our welfare? Just because He is not visible, we should not follow the saying "when the cat is away the mice are at play". Imagine that if the life-principle deserts us for a fraction of a second, we are considered as dead by others.

(2) **Yena sarvam idaṁ tatam**: All this is pervaded by the Lord. The entire universe is alive and kicking because there is presence of life, there is presence of manifest and unmanifest energy. This energy is inside all and surrounds all. This can only be realised by the eye of knowledge.

In a factory, if the boss makes his appearance, the worker instead of being lazy, becomes active again. The universal boss is everywhere, and is there at every moment. So, we should work with purity in thought and deed and not by being egotistic.

A musician always sings with a background drone. His singing becomes more melodious with the drone. Without the drone, he cannot sing in melody. The drone does not distract him but makes him sing better. Similarly, the *Paramātmā* behind our activities, should be like the drone for the musician.

Svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya: One should worship Him with one's duty. The workers, by performing their prescribed duties, are indirectly worshipping their boss and getting their monthly pay packet given by him. If they realise the importance of the boss' presence, they will put in their best efforts and the boss in turn gives them higher rewards.

By doing our prescribed duties, by working according to the *śāstra*s, we will get our due rewards. The first reward is burning of existing *vāsanā*s; the second reward is to attain purity and realisation of the Ultimate Truth. By perfection (*siddhi*) one can attain final liberation.

This verse, if analysed closely, shows the following facts:

(1) Perform one's duty — *Karma-yoga*.

(2) Worshipping by *Karma-bhakti*.

(3) Attain perfection — i.e., knowledge — *jñāna*.

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥४७॥

śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt |
svabhāvaniyataṁ karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam ||47||

Better is one's own duty, though without merits, than the duty of another well-performed. He who performs his duties ordained by his own nature incurs no sin.

viguṇah: Without merits.
anuṣṭhitāt: Performed.
svabhāva-niyatam: Ordained by own nature.
kilbiṣam: Sin.
na āpnoti: Does not incur.

This is one of the most important verses in the *Gītā*. The Lord explains the reason for asking people to work in their own field of work.

Dharma of course is righteousness, but it is not the only meaning of the word (chapter 1, introduction). It has 27 meanings and it is not easy to find the real equivalent of its meaning in English. It can be described as the essential nature of anything without which that thing cannot retain its independent existence. One can attribute a lot of 'characters' to the sun. But heat and light are its essential 'characters'. If there was no light or heat, then the sun would be non-existent.

We who are really the manifestation of the Lord, cannot exist without the Lord. The Lord's essential nature is purity, righteousness, kindness, forgiveness, etc. If we cannot exhibit these characteristics, we cannot retain our independent existence nor can we claim to be *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*. We will get trapped in *saṁsāra*. We will get bound and we suffer.

We have, first of all, to understand that we have accumulated *vāsanās* from the past. Those *vāsanās* were due to thoughts which became desires. We did not fulfil the desires before and hence we are at the present station in our life's journey. These *vāsanās* as *guṇa*s, have given us a way to work. We have to burn the *vāsanās* by doing *niṣkāma-karma*.

If we cannot fulfil what we desire, and do something else, we are actually accumulating more *vāsanā*s from the new field. Also, we are not familiar with the new field and we are bound to commit mistakes.

In an operating theatre, there are nurses, anaesthetists and surgeons together. The nurses have seen the surgeon closely in their capacity as assistants. But the nurse cannot take over the duties of the surgeon and carry on the surgery. The nurse has to undergo the education and training for surgery and can do so later if she has fulfilled the required training. (This comparatively can be said to be a new birth as a surgeon). As a nurse, the nurse does not get higher wages than the surgeon, and actually the surgeon gets the credit. Even though the nurse's position is not as rewarding as the surgeon's (*viguṇaḥ*), it is better for the nurse to perform her nursing duty well.

The duties of another may look easy, own duties may look inferior, but one should still stick to one's own duty and perform it well. This is the meaning of the first line of the verse (*śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt*).

In the second half, the Lord says that by doing one's own prescribed duties, one does not incur sin. There are two different interpretations of this statement. The first interpretation is for universal welfare. If everyone does his duties (as per his nature: *svabhāvaniyataṁ karma*) in society to the best of his capacity, he will automatically make the universe a better place to live in. Our future generations will reap the benefit.

If we go against our nature, we will commit mistakes and we will not be performing with complete efficiency. Our future generation will suffer. Is it not a sin to bring forth children into this world and not give them a proper world to live in?

If Arjuna had run away from the battlefield, he would have committed two sins. They are:

(a) He would have left *adharma* to rule and he would become indirectly responsible for the ensuing ruin while trying to purify himself.

(b) He would not have done his *svadharma* as a kṣatriya. Even if he became a *saṁnyāsī*, he would not have burnt his *rājasika vāsanā*s. He would not be liberating his *ātmā* inside him.

The second interpretation is for individual welfare. As we discussed in the beginning of this verse, our *dharma* is that of the Lord inside us. It is our *ātma-dharma. Paradharma* is the life with the objective world through ego (*jīva*). Meditating on the *ātmā* (Lord) inside may not appear easy and rewarding. Giving way to our senses and desires appears easy and rewarding, because, we will see the results with our physical eyes now. We will not see the results with our inner eye, of our future.

By performing *ātma-dharma*, we will attain liberation. By performing work that reflects the divinity in us, we will attain *mokṣa*. We will also make our surroundings pleasant. The intellectual flowers blossomed by divinity, with the absence of weeds of undivinity, will make a beautiful garden. People will come to the garden to enjoy the divinity of the blossoms.

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ॥४८॥

sahajaṁ karma kaunteya sadoṣam api na tyajet |
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ ||48||

O Kaunteya, one should not abandon the duty to which he is born, though faulty. For, all undertakings are enveloped by evil, as fire by smoke.

sahajam: Born of own nature
sadoṣamapi: Though faulty.
dhūmena: By smoke.
āvṛtāh: Surrounded.

Should we still perform duties that are beset with faults? This verse may give rise to some questions regarding performance of actions. It is easy to misinterpret.

We should reflect on the meaning of *vāsanā*s again. What we are now, is due to our unfulfilled thoughts and desires of years past. We must therefore burn those *vāsanā*s. To do so, we must perform our own duties born out of our nature. Evidently as we start now, we have impurities. We have *doṣa*s. We must wipe the *doṣa*s and make ourselves pure.

How? Let us look at a few examples. The mirror has dust of varying proportions. The thicker the dust, the greater the difficulty for us to see our reflection. We must, to see the reflection properly, clean the mirror. By cleaning other mirrors or by doing other jobs, our mirror remains dirty. We must therefore clean our mirror first. Not only that, we must keep on polishing it to keep the shine and get a good reflection.

When we light a fire, there is smoke surrounding it. If we fan the smoke away, we can see the glow of the fire. If we wipe the ignorance from our minds and avoid further impurities of our mind, we will attain Self-realisation soon.

The first half of the verse declares that one should still do one's own duty even if it is beset with faults. *Sahajaṁ karma* (existing *vāsanā*s born with) may be full of evil (*sadoṣam*) but one should not abandon it (*na tyajet*).

The second half of the verse clarifies some doubts. *Sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa āvṛtāḥ*, the Lord says. All undertakings are indeed enveloped by evil. What we should do is, clear the evil with which we are born and see to it that we do not accumulate other evils. *Sarvārambha* is beginning of all. If we do not have the sense of ego in our actions, we will not accumulate new *vāsanā*s. Our duty is to burn the *vāsanā*s and not to put new *vāsanā*s in.

When we burn the wood, initially we will get smoke and fire. By fanning the smoke away, we will let the fire burn the wood. By adding additional logs into the fire, we will increase the smoke.

We should not allow new *vāsanā*s to contaminate our personality and delay our liberation.

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।
नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति ।।४९।।

asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigataspṛhaḥ I
naiṣkarmyasiddhiṁ paramāṁ saṁnyāsenādhigacchati II49II

He, whose intellect is unattached everywhere, who has *subdued his Self, is free from desires, he through renunciation, attains the supreme actionless state.*

asaktabuddhi: Intellect unattached.
jitātmā: Mind subdued.
vigataspṛhaḥ: Free from desires.
naiṣkarmya-siddhim: Actionless State.

Lord Kṛṣṇa in this verse gives spiritual explanation of *saṁnyāsa*. This is the final definitive explanation to clarify Arjuna's misconception. Arjuna's understanding of *saṁnyāsa*, was that it was 'inaction'. He thought that by *saṁnyāsa*, one will not incur sin and therefore will attain *mokṣa*.

In this verse, *mokṣa* is described as a state achieved by *naiṣkarmya*. There should be no actions. To understand this, one must understand *vāsanā*s. Our thoughts leave an imprint on our minds. This imprint has to be wiped off by actions. Actions with desire to fulfil, leave further thought-imprints.

An actionless state means where there are no actions. Two types of actions must be absent.

(1) No actions forthcoming due to the *vāsanā*s. It means all existing *vāsanā*s must be wiped off. One should, therefore, perform necessary actions (due to the existing *vāsanā*s). This is called *vāsanā-kṣaya*. (Arjuna had to conduct himself as a kṣatriya, fight and burn his *vāsanā*s). In simple words, performing one's duty without the sense of ego, will wipe out existing *vāsanā*s.

(2) No reactions to the actions performed. By trying to obtain the fruits of action, further *vāsanā*s accumulate. This would end up as future actions.

Naiṣkarmya is the state where there are no actions to be performed now because we have burnt out all *vāsanā*s and no actions, due to reactions, to be performed later because we do not accumulate new *vāsanā*s.

Lord Kṛṣṇa, in chapter 4, states, "I have no actions to perform now and no actions to perform later, but I still do my work". *Naiṣkarmya* state is therefore the state of having achieved the state of the Lord, i.e., *mokṣa* or liberation. This state is acquired by renunciation, i.e., by renunciation of attachment.

(1) **Renunciation of attachments**: This is *sarvatra asaktabuddhiḥ*. The Intellect should not be attached to anything. By not letting one's senses to roam about in the outer world (i.e., through *dhyāna)* one cannot say he is not attached to anything. Running away from worldly commitments and wearing ochre robes do not make one a real *saṁnyāsī*. One should learn detachment at body, mind and intellectual levels. One's intellect should be totally clean.

Saṁnyāsa just to escape from the world is not real *saṁnyāsa*. Real *saṁnyāsa* should come from a sense of detachment from attachment (like lotus leaves). A clean shaven head is a symbol of a clean and shining intellect. Sometimes we see *saṁnyāsī*s with one single tuft of hair on their head, They have snapped off all connections to the outer world. They are connected faithfully to the Lord. This sole attachment to the Lord is symbolised by that one tuft of hair.

(2) **Jitātmā**: *Ātmā* falsely identified with the physical body becomes the ego. It is the 'I'-ness in our thoughts and actions. The ego is also known as *jīva*. The one who has conquered his ego is a *jitātmā*.

At the mental level, one tends to associate actions. 'I can do it', 'I did it', 'I will do it', are feelings that arise at the mental level. This is called *kartṛtva-bhāvanā* or *ahaṁ-bhāvanā*. Similarly, intellect is the seat of 'I'-ness in enjoying the results of action. 'I like it', 'I will like it', are the feelings at the intellectual level. This is *bhoktṛtva-bhāvanā*. *Jitātmā* is one who has conquered both *kartṛtva-* and *bhoktṛtva-bhāvanās*.

(3) **Vigataspṛhaḥ**: The ego is nourished by clinging to attachments or to the results of action. The greater the results, the greater will be the attachment of *jīva* to the body. *Spṛhā* is clinging to the attachments. *Vigataspṛhaḥ* is one free from such clinging. As desires result in attachment, not clinging to desires is *vigataspṛhā*.

By these three (*asaktabuddhi*, *jitātmā*, *vigataspṛhā*) one attains *naiṣkarmya siddhi* state, i.e., *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* therefore, is achieved in this world, in this life and is not something one gets after death. It comes from total detachment from desires. Real *saṁnyāsa* (which is freedom from detachment to desires and not actions) is the path to *mokṣa*.

Karma-phala-tyāga of chapter 5 is summarised in this verse.

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।
समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥५०॥

siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me |
samāsenaiva kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā ||50||

O Kaunteya, learn from Me in brief how reaching perfection in action, man attains Brahman, that Supreme state of knowledge.

Brahman is purity, *Brahman* is knowledge. The aim of human life is to attain this knowledge. The aim of the *Gītā* is explaining how to get this knowledge. In the next three verses, the Lord has summarised the entire teaching of the *Gītā*.

Samāsena: The Lord says that He is giving the path to purity and perfection in brief. Spiritually, all great scholars accept the next three verses as '*Saṁkṣipta Gītā*' (summary of the *Gītā*).

The body is under the control of the mind. The mind dictates to the body what to do and what not to do. The intellect is the controller of the mind and thereby of the body. It is the intellect that is tainted with impurity. By detachment one purifies the intellect. By detachment the intellect becomes free from attachments. This clears the path for meditation on the Supreme. The intellect is the reflecting medium for the *ātmā*. It is the mirror. It is clouded by ignorance, ignorance of the Real Truth, ignorance of 'who am I?' Ignorance of our real nature.

Lord Kṛṣṇa removes this final thin veil of ignorance from Arjuna's intellect. He is trying to help Arjuna to rediscover the state of *jīvanmukta*.

बुद्ध्या विशुद्धया युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।
शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ।।५१।।
buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānaṁ niyamya ca |
śabdādīn viṣayāṁs tyaktvā rāgadveṣau vyudasya ca ||51||

विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः ।
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ।।५२।।
viviktasevī laghvāśī yatavākkāyamānasaḥ |
dhyānayogaparo nityaṁ vairāgyaṁ samupāśritaḥ ||52||

अहङ्कारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।
विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ।।५३।।
ahaṁkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ parigraham |
vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahmabhūyāya kalpate ||53||

Endowed with pure understanding, firmly controlling one's Self, turning away from sound and other sense-objects, and abandoning attraction and hatred;

dwelling in solitude, eating but little, speech, body and mind subdued, always engaged in meditation and taking refuge in dispassion;

having abandoned egotism, (animal) power, arrogance, desire, anger and greed, free from the notion of mine, ever in peace — he is fit to become Brahman.

niyamya: Controlling.
vyudasya: Abandoning.
viviktasevī: Dwelling in solitude.
laghvāśī: Eating little.
samupāśritaḥ: Taking refuge in.
parigraham: Receiving gift from others.

The Lord as promised is going to explain briefly that aspect of Self-realisation. This He has already described in chapters 5 and 6.

The technique is *adhyātma-vidyā*. The goal achieved is *Brahma-sākṣātkāra* (realising and becoming *Brahman*). Twelve virtues are enumerated by the Lord. By possessing them in full, one will attain *mokṣa*.

(1) **Buddhyā viśuddhayā:** *Śuddhi* is purity. *Viśuddhi* is perfect total purity. *Buddhi* (intellect) must be perfectly pure. As the *buddhi* is the master over the mind, purifying the master (leader) would automatically help in obtaining other virtues.

All the past desires have left impurity in the intellect. These existing *vāsanā*s must be totally wiped out through selfless work. No new desires should come in from fruits of the work. *Vāsanā*s from reaction to the actions must not come in. Total absence of *vāsanā*s is the first virtue to cultivate. There should not be any tendency to acquire, possess and enjoy objects of the outer world.

(2) **Yukto dhṛtyā ātmānaṁ niyamya**: Endowed with firmness, control the Self. The mind is the next port of call after the intellect. It should be controlled with firmness. The mind has a capacity to dwell on the past memories. This capacity is known as temptation.

The mind is always receiving impulses from the sense-organs. By firm determination, one should be able to subdue the mind. One needs a lot of effort and courage to control it. The mind is like a wild horse. Arjuna's chariot was going to get out of control. It needed the power equal to the strength of Lord Kṛṣṇa to control it.

In life, to control our mind and make it reach the destination (salvation, *mokṣa*) one needs the Godly power. The Lord says *ātmānam* rather than *manam*. By *ātmā* He means the ego. It is the *ātmā* with mistaken identity with the body.

(3) **Śabdādīn viṣayān tyaktvā**: Abandoning all desire for sense-objects which pull the mind away from its efforts at concentration on the *ātmā*. Sound, sight, smell, touch and taste should not bring desires to the mind.

A big firm fortress has to be built around the mind and all the five gateways have to be secured firmly. Having secured the entry, the king must not enjoy the pleasures of the luxuries in the palace.

(4) **Rāgadveṣau vyudasya ca**: This means abandoning passion and hatred. These two are causes for the mind to get distracted from concentration on the *ātmā*, after it has closed the gateways of the sense-organs. The mind dwells on memories of likes and dislikes of the past and it starts planning the future action.

(5) **Viviktasevī**: The seeker should find a solitary place to pursue his meditation. This is essential to avoid external disturbances which would distract the mind from meditation on the Self.

One should not take the literal meaning of this and start living in a jungle. *Viviktasevī* means living in solitude. Any place that is quiet and free from distractions would do. Initially this can be accomplished by having a quiet room for meditation or prayer in the house. This should be kept clean always.

(6) **Laghvāśī**: This means moderation in food. We all know that too much food is not good for our health. One should eat *sāttvika* food as described in chapter 17, verse 8. One should also not punish the body by severe austerities like fasting for long periods. To develop a *sāttvika* mind one should eat *sāttvika* food.

(7) **Yatavāk-kāya-mānasaḥ**: This means controlling speech, body and mind. Here speech includes all sense-organs. Control of speech and mind has already been described in chapter 17, verses 15 and 16 (*anudvegakaraṁ vākyam....*)

The sense-organs are the channels that bring in stimuli to the mind. One should cultivate controlling all the sense-organs. Even a momentary lapse in such control will destroy the benefit of years of strict discipline.

Subduing the bodily organs is also required for Self-realisation. The bodily organs come in contact with the objects of the world and are responsible for bringing in more desires. It is impossible to totally block the entire contact with the outer world. One should cultivate the mind in such a manner that it will not develop attachment to worldly objects. Also, the mind should not dwell on past memories. All this has been beautifully described in chapter 2 (The characteristics of a *sthitaprajña*).

(8) **Dhyānayogaparo nityam**: By disciplining the actions which result in response to external stimuli and regulating the perception at body level, one will be able to continue meditation without disruption. Continuing meditation is the path to success in spiritual life.

We all live an active life in relation to the surrounding world. By acquiring the above qualities we will be able to retain a *sāttvika* state even while continuing to do our daily work. Meditation on the Lord is not by cutting off connection with the outer world. It is by developing:

(9) **Vairāgyaṁ samupāśritaḥ**: Dispassion to worldly objects. We should take refuge in dispassion, the Lord says. Detachment in attachment is the best way of meditation on the Lord while continuing to work in this world. Running away from the world is not *saṁnyāsa*.

Let us take an example. Suppose there is a thief walking in disguise on the same road with you. He may have a deceptive external appearance and he may be very friendly. It is easy to fall a prey to such a person. He will rob us of our possessions and go away.

While walking on the path of life, we should not fall a victim to such thieves. Sense-objects in the world will act as thieves and run away with our determination to join the Lord. By self-discipline, we should not develop attachments that distract us from our path. We should let desires run away from us rather than we running towards desires. The thief should run away from us. On seeing us, he should realise we are not fools. He should get frightened that we will catch him and send him to prison.

To achieve the above qualities, one should develop certain enduring values of life. They are acquired by the total abandonment of *bala*, *darpa, kāma, krodha* and *parigraha*. These arise from the notion of 'I'-ness in one's personality. This 'I'-ness is *ahaṁkāra*. This is the greatest evil.

The Self by wrong identification with the body and the outer world develops a liking to the surroundings. It becomes *jīva*, and *jīva* attributes everything to himself. ''This is mine, I will acquire this, I got it with my efforts'', is the attitude the *jīva* develops. In philosophical terms it is called 'ego'. Ego brings in more *vāsanā*s and distracts us from attaining *mokṣa*.

Bala and darpa: The egocentric personality manifests as power. It develops a sense of agency. We then fight to obtain our desires. The strength to obtain the desire to satisfy the ego is *balam*. This *balam* is sheer animal strength. Animals do not have the intellectual capacity to discriminate.

With intellectual capacity, we can use our spiritual strength to overcome the ego. Our spiritual strength to fight the powerful ego should be as strong as Arjuna's. Arjuna, in desperation had lost his spiritual strength. His *sārathī*, Lord Kṛṣṇa gave him the nectar of the *Gītā* and made him stronger. In our life, we must drink this nectar of the *Gītā*, become immortal like the *deva*s and develop strength to fight the ego.

With animal strength and with winning an object of desire, we become proud. We want to show others that we can get whatever we want. This arrogance, due to animal strength, is known as '*darpa*'. *Darpa* is sheer arrogance.

Kāma and krodha: Desire and anger have been described already several times in the *Gītā* (chapter 2, verse 63, *krodhād bhavati*.....). When one develops *bala* and *darpa*, naturally he becomes greedy. He wants to fulfil a lot of desires. He wants to get more and more, i.e., *kāma* (lust). When for some reason he cannot get what he wants, he will get angry. When, he loses what he has got, he gets angry. He would like to keep for himself what he gets. He cannot part with it at all.

This anger is *krodha*. With these characteristics, such a person wants to acquire objects by any means and at any cost. He wants the object of his lust. This desire to obtain is *parigraha*. *Parigraha* also means receiving gifts from others. The *śāstra*s strongly condemn such acts.

Apart from charity which is to sustain one's life (where one cannot provide himself and his family what is necessary to live, i.e., in poverty, disability, etc.) no other gift must be accepted from others. The *śāstra*s declare that by receiving such gifts, one would indirectly also receive the sin from the person who gave the gift. Whatever sin the giver may have committed, some of that sin passes through the gift to the receiver.

Also, the gifts add to one's pleasure and drag him into the cycle of *saṁsāra*. They increase one's store of *vāsanā*s. The Lord says *vimucya*. "Be free from all of these, be free from *ahaṁkāra*, and you will attain Me" the Lord says.

Brahmabhūyāya kalpate: You will be fit to attain the state of *Brahman*, is the Lord's compassionate statement to Mankind. Abandoning the evils of *bala*, *darpa*, etc. and acquiring the virtues like *vairāgya*, *dhyāna*, we will be fit to attain *mokṣa*.

Nirmamaḥ: This is the egoless state. '*Mama*' is 'mine'. *Nirmama* is 'not-mine'. The self becomes real Self. It drops its ego. The self with a small 's', becomes Self with a capital 'S'. Self with a capital 'S' is *ātmā*. It is Real. Self with small 's' is ego and it is false. The peace one finds himself in by this method is *śānti*. It is a wonderful experience. There will be no agitations at all in one's mind. In such a lake, where there are no external disturbances, the intellectual lotus blossoms.

The Lord does not say that one attains *mokṣa*. He is careful in phrasing His words. He says *kalpate*. He says, one is fit to attain *mokṣa*. Till all *vāsanā*s are burnt one cannot attain *mokṣa*.

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ।।५४।।

brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati **|**
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktiṁ labhate parām **||54||**

Becoming Brahman, *serene-minded, he neither grieves nor desires; he is equal-minded to all, he obtains a supreme devotion to Me.*

brahmabhūtaḥ: *Jīvanmukta*.
prasannātmā: Calm, serene-minded.
na kāṅkṣati: Does not desire.

By developing the virtues mentioned and by dropping the evils mentioned in the above three verses, the Lord says one would be fit to become *Brahman*. What should we do then to become *Brahman*? This is answered in this verse.

Na śocati, na kāṅkṣati: We should not grieve nor desire. These are two aspects for Self-realisation. Both have to do with 'I'-ness. The first aspect is dropping the sense of agency in action. This is *kartṛva bhāva* ('I did it', mentality). This arises from the level of one's mind. Another aspect is dropping the sense of agency in enjoyment (this is *bhaktṛtva-bhāvanā*). This arises at the intellectual level. One develops looking at objects at personal level. One develops likes and dislikes. Because of 'likes' one feels happy on getting and enjoying the object of desire. Because of the same feeling of 'likes', one feels sorrow on losing what he likes or on not getting what he likes.

There should not be any happiness or sorrow, if one has to attain total peace and tranquillity. The state of happiness which does not end in sorrow is *prasannatā*. It is the serenity in one's mental composure. Philosophically, it is called *ānanda*. This happiness comes from within and not from contacts with the outer world.

Samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu: One should develop equal-mindedness to all beings. One should develop universal love. This is the essential theme of the *Gītā*. By developing inner tranquillity, by dropping *ahaṁkāra*, by not having likes and dislikes, by not having happiness or grief, one's evaluation of the surrounding changes. One does not expect anything from others. One can give others what one has got and this is love and compassion.

Madbhaktiṁ labhate parām: The individuals attain supreme devotion to Me, the Lord says. The knower of the Truth is a *jñānī*. The one who develops supreme devotion is a *bhakta*. *Jñānī* becomes a *bhakta*. The Lord has quelled all differences between a *jñānī* and a *bhakta*. The *jñānī* at the end becomes a *bhakta* and the *bhakta* (chapter 12) also, becomes a *jñānī*. They are intermingled.

The devotion one has for the Lord (universal love) is *paramā bhakti*. *Paramā bhakti* is ceaseless devotion to the Lord. As the

Lord is inside us as *ātmā,* ceaseless devotion to, and contemplation on, *ātmā* is *paramā bhakti*.

As the same *ātmā* is in all, contemplation and love for all is *paramā bhakti.* Such a person who has understood and practised this is a *jīvanmukta*. It is like becoming *Brahman* (*brahmabhūtaḥ*). He has no *kartṛtva* - or *bhoktṛtva-bhāvanā.* He is in a state of *ānanda* and has merged with the *Brahman*. The *jīvanmukta* must continue to live in the virtues mentioned so far.

This is not the end. There is still another stage in the pilgrimage towards the Truth.

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥५५॥

bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ |
tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram ||55||

By devotion, he knows Me in essence, who and what I am; then having known Me in essence, he forthwith enters (*into Me*).

bhaktyā: Through devotion.
tattvataḥ: In essence.
yāvān: What I am.
yaścāsmi: Who I am.
abhijānāti: Knows.

After explaining that true knowledge leads to deep devotion (*jñāna* leads to *paramā bhakti*) in the previous verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa now states that by deep devotion one understands the real nature of the Lord. The devotee comes to know who the Lord is and what the Lord is. The two verses are not contradictory. They are really complementary.

We will understand this better if we take an example. The baby when born, does not immediately love its mother. After the initial few days or weeks, the baby realises that the person (mother) is taking care of its needs as and when they arise. The baby gradually develops love for the person who cares for her in such a tender fashion. By the time the baby grows into childhood the child's mental development would also be proportionate. The child learns and understands its surroundings. The child comes to know the environment.

In this process of learning, she comes to know her mother very well. She first knew the mother who cared for her, she then loved the mother who cared for her; in turn, she started knowing her mother who cared for her.

In all stages, the mother continues to care for her child. The child grows from knowledge to devotion and from devotion to knowledge of her mother. The child who knows her mother perfectly is also the perfect devotee of her mother. Now if we replace child with devotee and mother with the Lord, the two verses will be understood better.

Devotion is love for the Supreme. It is measured by the degree of identification the devotee has with the Lord. Total identification necessarily means dropping the *ahaṁ bhāvanā*. Ego must be non-existent. Only then the devotee will know who the Lord is and what the Lord is.

A husband is in true love with his wife, and does what pleases his wife. He identifies himself with his wife and looks from the wife's angle on all actions he undertakes. ''Does she like it? Does she hate it? If I take the flowers, will she be happy? If I stop drinking and smoking and gambling, will she be happy? If so, I will not do these anymore''. These are the ways he looks at what he does. He can do it initially by knowing his wife, by knowing her likes and dislikes. He starts loving her and thus he gets to understand her better. The more he understands her, the more he loves her. This chain continues. Once he has understood her totally, it is like his becoming one with her. The wife's love for her husband is in a similar chain of action. This is true, sincere love for each other.

Bhaktyā mām abhijānāti: Devotee, by devotion knows Me.

Tattvataḥ: He knows the Lord in essence. (One drop of essence is enough to give flavour to large quantity of water. Essence is the concentrated form of the flavour.)

Tato mām tattvato jñātva: Having known Me (the Lord) in essence. This comes from a slow and steady input of knowledge. Living the life of knowledge gives wisdom. This helps in overcoming egotistic actions and behaviour.

Viśate tadanantaram: Afterwards he enters the stage of the devotee. After becoming wise (*vijñānī*) and living that life, he enters into the Lord. It is not like entering and going back afterwards. In the real sense, it is like salt dissolving in water.

When we are in bed at night, we do go into a dream-world. When we wake up, we get back into the familiar world of our daily life. We got back from the dream-world into the world of living beings. This process of going from one state to another but not returning to the former state is termed as entering into the Lord. The ego disappears totally and *ātmā* regains its original status.

This is the state of Kṛṣṇa-consciousness.

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥५६॥
sarvakarmāṇy api sadā kurvāṇo madvyapāśrayaḥ **।**
matprasādād avāpnoti śāśvataṁ padam avyayam **॥56॥**

Performing all actions continually, he who takes refuge in Me only, by My grace, he obtains the indestructible, eternal state.

kurvāṇo'pi: Performing even.
madvyapāśrayaḥ: Taking refuge in the Lord only.

Having obtained *jñāna* through devotion, the life of the devotee is not complete. He has to live till death. This stanza explains what one has to do after attaining knowledge.

A medical student, by sincere application and devotion to studies, becomes a doctor. Becoming a doctor is not the end of it all. It is actually the beginning of application of what has been learnt to the welfare of the people who need help. Similarly, a true devotee, having understood the Lord has to perform godly actions, should perform all actions continually (*sarvakarmāṇy api sadā kurvāṇaḥ*)

One must remember that ''all actions'' does not mean ''any action''. After all, the devotee is supposed to have become a *jñānī*. His work has to be in propagating divine virtues. He has to make his intellectual garden a beautiful place to share with others. He should spread his divinity around.

By such actions, which do not have ego in them, he will kill all existing *vāsanā*s. Also, as he is doing work without looking for fruits of action, he will not get any new *vāsanā*s. This is done by taking refuge in the Lord (*mad-vyapāśrayaḥ*). The ego must totally drop off from the person. There should be no agency or selfishness behind those actions.

This is understood better by comparison to a Kuchipudi dancer dancing on a plate. The dancer continues to concentrate on keeping her feet on the plate and performs all other dancing movements automatically. Such should be the mode of action of a true devotee and *jñānī*.

Matprasādāt: My (god's) grace.

It says that one attains eternal peace by God's grace only. It is His grace and nothing else. He does not come down to show His presence in front of the devotee. His grace removes all stains of ignorance from the devotee. But to obtain this grace, the devotee must do all obligatory duties to society.

Avāpnoti śāśvatam padam: Obtains the eternal place.

Śāśvatam avyayam: The Lord has explained what is the state of *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is the eternal, imperishable state. The state of eternal bliss (*ānanda*) enjoyed on knowing the Truth (*sat*) and obtaining the knowledge (*cit*) is *mokṣa*. This happiness will not end in sorrow. All other states of happiness end in sorrow. They are only short-lived states of experience of the mind.

The last three verses have a beautiful meaning which makes one understand the real meaning of the *Gītā* quite well.

(1) **Karma-yoga**: All actions performed at body level to control the mind and turn the direction of the mind towards purity is *karma-yoga*.

(2) **Bhakti-yoga:** All actions at mental level that channel one's emotions so that it can contemplate on the Truth is *bhakti-yoga*. They help in disciplining one's mind.

(3) **Jñāna-yoga**: Study, knowledge and reflection on the Truth, which help in discrimination, detachment and meditation of the Supreme, at intellectual level is *jñāna-yoga*.

A true perceiver (*karmī*), feeler (*bhakta*) and thinker (*jñānī*) can go in the path of spiritual realisation and attain total freedom from *saṁsāra*. A true *sādhaka* has to follow all the three paths and he attains (*sādhya*) *mokṣa*. He practises (*sādhanā*) all the three methods.

This is what is meant by *kāya, mana* and *citta-śuddhi* to attain purity.

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥५७॥

cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparaḥ |
buddhiyogam upāśritya maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava ||57||

Mentally surrendering all actions in Me, having Me as the highest goal, resorting to the yoga of discrimination, fix your mind ever on Me.

cetasā: Mentally.
maccittaḥ: Mind fixed on Me.

The first half of this verse gives the doctrine of *karma-yoga*. The Lord is never tired of repeating it. Please develop the attitude of '*kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu*', the Lord says (*mayi saṁnyasya sarvakarmāṇi*). Perform all actions but do not have the 'I'-ness in it, is the command by the Lord. There should be no ego and there should be no desire for the fruits of action.

Matparaḥ: This can be achieved if one has the belief that "the Lord is the highest goal". If the mind can constantly contemplate on the Lord, the body can perform all prescribed duties. It is an eternal law, viz., ''what we think, so we become''. The devotee, by living and thinking of Lord Kṛṣṇa, becomes Lord Kṛṣṇa. We must live in Kṛṣṇa-consciousness in all our activities.

Buddhiyogam upāśritya: Resorting to *buddhi-yoga*. *Buddhi* is power of discrimination. It is an intellectual capacity. In the 10th chapter, the Lord has promised "*dadāmi buddhiyogam*" (I) will give knowledge of discrimination). If we can fix our mind on the Lord, He will grace us with *buddhi*. He gives us the power to discriminate right from wrong in all our actions.

Saṁnyāsa: One must surrender all fruits of action (but not by becoming a *saṁnyāsī*) and then the Lord will shower His grace on us.

Satataṁ bhava: This feeling has to be constant. Constantly keep the searchlight to illumine the *ātmā* (constantly keep the light of knowledge glowing) and you will get My blessing, the Lord promises.

Māyā is always there to drag us away from our path. If we keep to our path, the Lord says He will keep the dragon Maya from dragging us away. He will give us *buddhi*.

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।
अथ चेत्त्वमहङ्कारान्न श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि ।।५८।।

***maccittaḥ sarvadurgāṇi matprasādāt tariṣyasi* |**
***atha cet tvam ahaṁkārān na śroṣyasi vinaṅkṣyasi* ||58||**

Fixing your mind on Me, by My grace, you shall overcome all obstacles; if from egotism you will not hear Me, you will perish.

sarva-durgāṇi: All obstacles.
tariṣyasi: Transcend.
na śroṣyasi: Not hear.
vinaṅkṣyasi: Perish.

The first half of this verse tells us the benefits we get from surrender to the Lord. The second half tells us the result if we do not surrender to the Lord.

Matcittaḥ: If we can fix our mind on Him, He will by His grace (*mat-prasādāt*) help us to overcome (*tariṣyasi*) all obstacles (*durgāṇi*).

As we have discussed so far in the *Gītā*, our entire life is what we make of it. If we believe in God and would like to consider this world as *karma-bhūmi* (the land to purify our actions), we will be able to look at our life in a philosophical way.

This verse makes sense to those who believe in *ātman* inside all the varied manifestations in this universe. If we believe in the *ātman,* and if we want to attain *mokṣa*, we have to train our mind. Our mind is like a searchlight. It can be turned in towards *ātmā* or it can be turned out towards the outer world.

Whatever we do is indirectly attributed to our mind because it is the centre of activity in our body. The mind sees what it wants and the mind does what it wants through the sense-organs. We should therefore turn the searchlight in and see the *ātman* in our mind. This is what is meant by 'fixing our mind on the Lord'. As the Lord is really not a person with any physical form but the twenty-six qualities (chapter 16, verses 1, 2 & 3), we should be constantly persuing these qualities with our mind.

By constantly looking and fixing concentration on divine qualities, we will be able to direct the mind to perform divine actions with our sense-organs and organs of action. The Lord will grace us with His blessings and help us to project those divine qualities in our actions. In other words, we would be able to do what we want by what we are contemplating upon.

What are the obstacles in our path? What are the *durga*s (obstacles) we have to cross? The obstacles we have to cross, are our *vāsanā*s which together constitute *māyā*. We have to fulfil the past desires/thoughts which we had entertained but had not fulfilled.

Basically then the obstacles are the three *guṇa*s: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. We have to overcome the passionate actions due to *rajas*. We have finally to overcome even the feeling that we want to attain *mokṣa*.

By believing in the Lord, by constantly meditating on the Lord, by performing all actions without ego, by not looking for fruits of action, by continuing to act for universal welfare after attaining purity in all actions (after reaching the *sāttvika* state), while performing all such actions and with God's grace one will attain Godhood. On the contrary, if we do not believe in God and if the searchlight is directed to the outer world, we will automatically be seeing with our mind, the material world only.

We develop desires. We want to fulfil desires. We want to develop more desires. We get angry and frustrated if we do not get what we want. We lose our sense of proportion. Delusion overcomes us. Our mind is confused. Our actions will not be co-ordinated. We will perish. We do all this with a sense of ego. This gives us the feeling of *ahaṁkāra*. We get false power (*balam*) arrogance (*darpam*). We get angry (*krodham*). We get deluded (*sammoham*). We lose our sense of proportion (*smṛtivibhrama*). We will perish (*vinaśyati*). This has been described in chapter 2, verse 63.

It is not the Lord's judgement that we go to hell. The Lord is clearly stating the end-result following our actions which put us into a chain of reactions as mentioned above. It is a natural process of downward progress. We tumble down so rapidly that we find it difficult to stop. The Lord never curses us to go to hell. We fall into hellish situation by our own actions. The Lord is asking us to 'hear Him'. Hear what He has said so far, understand what He has said so far, do what He has said so far. He will give us His grace.

If we do not hear what He has said so far or do not care to understand it and do not do what He has asked us to do, and finally, if we do whatever we want, we will not have His grace. We will perish.

The Lord inside us is always telling us in soft and gentle words to do divine actions. Our conscience is always warning us of the effects of wrong actions. As it is coming from a closed box, we do not hear it. We suppress it forcibly and in course of time we forget it. We listen to our ego which shows us constantly all desirable objects. The voice of ego takes over our life. We will fall into *saṁsāra*. If we can control the ego, and listen to the soft, gentle voice inside, we will escape from *saṁsāra*.

God's grace is there all around us. It is there inside us. But we do not see it. The sunlight is there for everybody. If we go inside our house (*ahaṁkāra*) and close all the windows, we will not get sunlight inside our house. We will not feel the warmth of sunshine. It does not mean that the sun is angry with us. His grace is there. But it is we who do not receive it because of our actions.

Similarly, the grace of trees is always there for anybody to take shelter under them. If we do not go there, we cannot say that the tree did not give us shelter.

यदहङ्कारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥५९॥

yad ahaṁkāram āśritya na yotsya iti manyase |
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyas te prakṛtis tvāṁ niyokṣyati ||59||

If prompted by egotism, you think "I will not fight", vain is this, your resolve; nature will compel you.

na yostye: Do not fight.
vyavasāyaḥ: Resolve.
niyokṣyati: Compel.

This statement is to remind Arjuna on what first started this discourse. Arjuna did not want to fight. But, in the beginning he did not know the philosophy behind his statement. After giving such a lengthy discourse, the Lord points out that Arjuna's statement was simply an expression of his ego.

Arjuna was taught *Veda*s in his earlier days. There were two things that were not correct when he was taught initially.

(1) The *Veda*s were very vast and it was difficult to assimilate them all. Arjuna, as a student was young. It should have been difficult to learn the entire *Veda*s and grasp the meaning. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by His grace, has summarised the *Veda*s into *Gītopaniṣad*. He has milked the cow of plenty. He, the cowherd is giving us the milk of *Veda*s, which is easy to digest.

(2) Arjuna had not faced life's problems at that time. Being clever, (he was a *jñānī*), he had managed to get his 'university degree'. But he was not a *vijñānī*. He had not got the wisdom.

He felt that he would be happy by not fighting and by not killing his own people. He thought he would be peaceful in a retreat.

The Lord says that it is the 'ego' of Arjuna that is uttering those ignorant words. Immediately, the Lord adds an adjunctive to this statement. He says that nature will make him do what it wants. Arjuna's *guṇa*s, due to his *vāsanā*s, will compel him to do what they want.

Arjuna, the kṣatriya has *rājasika guṇa*s in him. He has to wipe them out by his actions. By performing actions (1) with absence of ego and (2) by renouncing the fruits of action, Arjuna, like everybody else, will be able to attain *mokṣa*.

The Lord did not give *mokṣa* to His friend Arjuna by his sheer grace. The Lord, by His anger did not curse Duryodhana to go hell. He is giving philosophical advice and guidance to a sincere seeker who had taken refuge in Him.

Let us all remember this truth. We must purify ourselves by our actions. He will shower His grace in proportion to our divine actions. Or we will fall into the pit of *saṁsāra* in proportion to our selfish actions. We must act according to our nature and burn our *vāsanā*s.

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात्करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत् ॥६०॥

***svabhāvajena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā* |**
***kartuṁ necchasi yan mohāt kariṣyasy avaśo'pi tat* ||60||**

O Arjuna, bound by your own karma, *born of your own nature, that which through delusion you do not wish to do, even that you shall do helplessly, against your will.*

svena: His own.
nibaddhaḥ: Bound firmly.
icchasi: Desire, wish.
avaśaḥ: Helplessly.

Continuing the theme of the previous two verses, the Lord concludes that line of thought.

Svena karmaṇā (By your own actions): If our actions are done with a sense of ego, they will add reactions which will come in as more *vāsanā*s on our minds. In the process of burning existing *vāsanā*s, we start accumulating more *vāsanā*s.

Svabhāvajena (Born of one's nature): Due to our unfulfilled desires, after death in the previous existence, the subtle body will take on a new life so that all old desires will be fulfilled. So, born of one's own nature, one is compelled to act in the present station in one's life.

Nibaddhaḥ: *Baddhaḥ* means bound. *Nibaddhaḥ* means firmly bound. Our nature and our present actions (egotistic) firmly bind us to act.

Kartuṁ na icchasi: If we do not want to act, then that is only a delusion (*mohāt*). We have to learn the way to act by following scriptures. *Śāstra*s are there to help us. By not learning *śāstra*s, we cannot become clever. By thinking that we do not want to work, we do not become clever either. We cannot attain spiritual freedom.

Kariṣyati avaśo'pi: We will helplessly do what our nature propels us to do, because of our *vāsanā*s.

Our life is a tug-of-war. On one side, we have our *vāsanā*s. On the other, we have our divine voice within. By practice, by *śāstra*s, by *guru*s, we can strengthen our divine voice within. We can get the twenty-six divine virtues to join our divine team.

If, during the process, we become selfish and show *ahaṁkāra,* those new actions will join the opposite force and strengthen the opposition. If we look for fruits of action, they will also put forth new *vāsanā*s which will join the opposition.

It is up to us to strengthen our team (divine) or strengthen the opposition (*vāsanā*s). It is up to us to show our strength and attain liberation. We will get what we deserve.

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥६१॥
īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśe'rjuna tiṣṭhati |
bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā ||61||

O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings, causing all beings to revolve like puppets mounted on a machine, by His illusive power.

yantrārūḍhāni: Puppets on a machine.
bhrāmayan: Made to revolve.
hṛddeśe: In the heart.
tiṣṭhati: Exists.

This verse is supposed to quell the doubts of the ignorant. The majority of us, ignorant beings, do not recognise Him or think of Him as dwelling in a far off place.

The Lord says: *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hṛddeśe tiṣṭhati* (The Lord who controls all, is residing in the heart of all beings). He is inside all beings. This is very important. From a small insect to the cleverest human being, He is inside all. From a śudra to a brāhmaṇa, He is inside all.

Knowing this, if we respect the Lord, we must respect all in this universe. There should not be any feeling of superiority because of position, wealth or caste. Nor should there be any feeling of inferiority because of position, wealth or caste.

Of course, when the Lord says He is inside the heart, it should not be taken literally. It is not the physical heart. Heart by its kindness treats all parts of the body equally. It distributes its love to all. It is our mind that distributes the actions. The divine mind will distribute love to all by its actions. The Lord is, literally speaking, in the minds of the people.

What does he do? He energises the inert matter (*jaḍa*) and brings life out. He activates the matter. Without the spirit within, the physical body composed of five elements is considered as dead. What happens next? *Prakṛti* (matter) consists of three *guṇa*s and they constitute *māyā*. The unfulfilled desires of all the beings are in an unmanifest form. This is *māyā*.

The Lord energises these into beings and provides a medium to fulfil the desires. Like a puppet on a machine, we revolve around the life in this world. We keep on acting to fulfil our desires and accumulate new desires. The cycle goes on and on. The Lord, through *māyā,* makes us go round the world of life like puppets on a machine (*bhrāmayan*).

Who is *Īśvara*? Our body consists of mind, intellect, sense-organs and organs of action. Each of the five sence-organs has a presiding deity called *deva*. For example, the deity for the ear is 'space'. Sound travels in space. Sounds travelling into the ear could not have done so if there were no space. Ears function only in the medium of space.

Similarly, earth is the *deva* for nose (smell). Water is the *deva* for mouth (taste). Fire is the *deva* for eye (light). And air is the *deva* for skin (touch). All these gross elements make up the universe. But, they cannot register themselves in individuals in the absence of the mind. It is the mind that has to register all the messages from the five senses. This mind is the Lord of all senses.

The mind is the Lord (*Īśvara*) of all beings. Mind is the heart of all beings. The Lord (*ātman*) vitalises the life in us and expresses through the mind and its actions. If we do act egotistically, it is because the Self falsely identifies itself with the body. It has becomes the ego.

If we overcome our ego, the same Self shines through the body; divinity expresses itself in actions.

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥६२॥
tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata |
tatprasādāt parāṁ śāntiṁ sthānaṁ prāpsyasi śāśvatam ||62||
O Bhārata, with all your being, take refuge in the Lord; by His grace, you shall obtain peace and eternal abode.

sarvabhāvena: With all your being.

We should first of all make a small comparison to understand this verse. We all go out of our house in the morning, do our work and come home in the evening. When we come home, we feel peaceful and keep our feet up and we relax after our work. If all has gone well at work, if we have done a sincere and honest day's work, the feeling of relaxation we get on keeping our feet up in our own house is something we experience. We cannot put that in words.

Similarly, we have come out of the Lord, we have to do our life's work and go back to Him. We will experience the same bliss as we do here on reaching our house at the end of the day. The place we reach after fulfilling all our work is the place of *parā* (eternal), *śānti* (peaceful), *śāśvatam* (permanent).

How do we reach that place? Really we have no control over ourselves. We are born in this world. We cannot say we do not want to be born. After being born, we have to live till we die. We have no control over it. We have to look after our body as long as we live. We must do it or else suffer. So, we have to work. We have no control over it. If we do not work, we will suffer. What should we do then?

Tameva śaraṇam gaccha: We should take refuge in Him. If we remember Him, if we remember that we came from Him, we should ask Him to take us back to Him. We should take shelter under Him.

What is He in whom we take shelter? He is twenty-six divine qualities (chapter 16, verses 1, 2, 3). We should take shelter under them by developing those virtues in us. This is what is meant by *sarva-bhāvena*. Our body, mind and speech we must surrender. In all our actions, in all our beings, we must remember the divinity and take shelter under it. Then by His grace (*tat-prasādāt*) we will enter into His house again.

Our surrender to the Lord must be complete. If we go to the temple and ask Him to cure us of an illness, it is not total surrender. ''God, help me'' will not get us God's mercy. We must surrender to Him unconditionally and completely.

This verse is the theme of the opening stanza of *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*. (The god pervades everything in this world; renounce all multiplicity, enjoy the infinite and do not covet anybody's wealth).

We must surrender our ego. We must identify ourselves with the *ātman* rather than its *upādhi* (vehicle), viz., the body. We must use our *upādhi* as a medium for His expression. Then only we are called pure and we become Godly. We attain liberation and do not have to go back to work the next day again.

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद् गुह्यतरं मया ।
विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥६३॥
iti te jñānam ākhyātaṁ guhyād guhyataraṁ mayā |
vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru ||63||

Thus, 'the wisdom' has been declared by Me to you; this is a greater secret than all secrets; having reflected upon it fully, act according to your wish.

akhyātam: Declared.
vimṛśya: Having reflected over.

As far as the teaching by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the teacher concerned, this verse is the end of His teaching.

Iti te jñānam: (This wisdom). This word includes all the paths towards attaining liberation. *Karma*, *bhakti*, *jñāna, dhyāna*, *yoga* and other *yoga*s described so far, are included. The real final knowledge (*cit*) is in having understood the final Truth (*sat*) which brings all misery to an end. It gives *ānanda*. True knowledge of the Lord is the real knowledge. (One should not squabble over which is the best path to follow.)

Guhyāt guhyataraṁ mayā ākhyātam:''The secret of all secrets has been declared by Me''. Why did the Lord say this teaching of the *Gītā* is a secret? Certainly, He did not want it to be in the hands of a selected few. If so, it would have been misused by them. I am sure, there are a few who would like to think that it should not be taught to all.

Let us consider this in some detail. What is a secret? Why do we have secrets? Secret means keeping something hidden so that others cannot see or hear of it. If it is open, anybody can see it and it would be no more a secret. A thing that is a secret makes one more inquisitive. One will put forth more efforts to see or hear of it. People are more interested to hear or see it.

To understand the secret message is also not easy to the unintelligent person. The secret message appears like a jumble of words, it does not make any sense. To the learned ones (e.g., spies, intelligence agents) the coded message is easy to understand. They pass it on to the right hands. This will enable them to achieve success in their endeavour.

The Lord wants people to achieve success in their lives. He wants the people not to be selfish. He wants all to live for universal welfare and make the world a better place to live in for future generations. His message of *advaita* and universal love is the secret behind the teaching. Individual upliftment and the upliftment of society is the secret message behind the doctrine of the *Gītā*.

It needs the right mental framework. It needs close questioning of oneself. One should be able to question himself on what he is, what his aim in life is and analyse it. It needs an inquistive mind. Those who are initiated from childhood into divine values of life are able to understand it better. Not only that, they should be able to pass it on to others. The learned ones should not go to the jungle and leave society in the hands of unlearned people. They should be able to shoulder the responsibility of passing the message to others. Of course there are a number of people who are ignorant of the spiritual truth. They follow blindly what the learned say.

There are some who misunderstand the *Gītā* and misrepresent the *Gītā*. They give wrong meaning and interpret the message wrongly. If such people teach the *Gītā* to the ignorant, it would make them follow the wrong teaching. There are a few who misuse the message and use it for their personal gain. There are a few who deliberately misrepresent the meaning and dissuade others from following it.

So, the Lord wants those who sincerely want to uplift themselves and want universal welfare to learn it. Hence, He says, it is the secret of all secrets. The teachers who are teaching the message of the *Gītā*, must select the right student and find the right moment to disseminate its true message.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa was Arjuna's friend. But He did not teach the *Gītā* to Arjuna earlier. Arjuna had seen and realised the divine virtues of his friend. But he did not go deep into it. But, just before the war, during his state of despondency, he realised the truth. He asked his friend to be his teacher.

Not only that, Śrī Kṛṣṇa listened patiently to Arjuna's laments. Arjuna asked Śrī Kṛṣṇa for help. ''I do not know what I have to do, please help me'' he said. When the student was ready, when the student was the right student to receive, Śrī Kṛṣṇa delivered His gospel.

This message from Śrī Kṛṣṇa is for the learned ones. The teachers should follow what He did, i.e., explain the *Gītā* to true spiritual seekers, when they are ripe enough to receive it.

Vimṛśya etad aśeṣeṇa: (Reflect totally over what has been said). Any true teacher would do exactly what Śrī Kṛṣṇa said. He would ask His students to reflect over completely what has been taught. The sincere student needs time to dwell on what has been taught. He needs to look analytically at the statements by his teacher. The student will then be able to answer the questions properly. The student will be able to apply such knowledge properly in his daily life.

Yathecchasi tathā kuru: (As you wish, so you act). One should note that the teacher did not tell his student what he has to do. Why should he do so anyway? After all he has done his duty. He should not be looking for fruits of action.

If Śrī Kṛṣṇa had told Arjuna what he had to do, it would have been wrong on two grounds. Firstly, He would have gone against His own teaching. For, he has repeated several times that proper *karma* means that act from which one does not look for fruits of action.

Of course, Śrī Kṛṣṇa wanted to uphold *dharma*. He knew Arjuna and his brothers would kill the Kauravas. But if he had advised Arjuna what he had to do, it would mean that He, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, would be looking for results. His work would not have been *niṣkāma karma*.

Secondly, Arjuna, having analysed the message, became a stronger person. He was physically a strong warrior. But now, he has become mentally strong. Because he has to take his own decisions, he will think properly before acting. That would make him a better warrior. (Similarly, we will become better warriors in our battle of life, if we are taught by teachers and we analyse our actions before we undertake them).

> सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
> इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ॥६४॥
> ***sarvaguhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ*** **|**
> ***iṣṭo'si me dṛḍham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam*** **||64||**
>
> *Hear again, My Supreme word, most secret of all; because you are dear to Me, therefore I shall tell you what is for your good.*

Bhūyaḥ śṛṇu: Hear again, the Lord says. The Lord, the best of all teachers, has immense compassion towards His student and towards Mankind. Arjuna may have grasped it immediately but we, the ignorant, need repeated instructions.

Sarvaguhyatamam: Most secret of all.

Me paramaṁ vacaḥ: My supreme word. After all, the Lord is teaching about the Ultimate Truth. It is therefore the 'supreme word'.

Iṣṭo'si me dṛḍham: ''You are My dearly beloved'', the Lord says to Arjuna.

A proper teacher teaches with true love for his student. A proper student listens with sincere faith to what is being taught (chapter 4, verse 4). One cannot buy spiritual knowledge. It comes by one's faith in his master. The master out of love gives his best to his student.

The Lord is compassionate to Mankind. He dearly loves us all. After all, He is our father Isn't He?

> मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
> मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥६५॥

manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru |
mām evai'ṣyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo'si me ||65||

Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice for Me, bow down to Me; surely then you shall come to Me alone; truly I do promise, you are dear to Me.

madyājī: Sacrifice to Me.
pratijāne: I promise.
eṣyasi: Shall come.

This and the next verse are the *sarvaguhyatamam* (the most secret) summary of the Lord's teaching.

The first half of this verse lays down four conditions for spiritual progress. The second half gives the end-result of following those four conditions in everyday life.

Manmanā: Fix your mind on Me.

All our bodily actions will be pure if our mind is pure. The mind can be pure if we contemplate on divinity. In all our actions, we must remember the Lord inside us. We should know that there is a Witness for our actions. By ever remembering Him in all our actions we will be helping in universal welfare. We will be doing His work as His messengers.

Madbhakto: Be devoted to Me.

True, sincere devotion is total identification with the loved ones. By total identification with the Lord, all our actions should be the ones that will please Him. It means, again, acts of universal welfare.

Madyājī: Sacrifice to Me.

Dedicate all bodily actions to the Lord. True *karma-yoga* involves no selfish motto behind actions. There should not be any egocentric activities (*sakāma karma*) and there should be no longing for fruits of action.

Niṣkāma karma and *karma-phala-tyāga* will burn existing *vāsanās* and will not add new *vāsanās*.

Māṁ namaskuru: Bow down to Me.

By the attitude of surrender on the part of the student, the best comes out of the teacher. By surrendering, by prostrating, we are bowing to something higher. The Lord, the Supreme Knowledge, is higher than anything. We are nothing compared to Him. We should therefore surrender totally to the Lord. (In olden days, the doors that led one inside the temple were made smaller and smaller as they approached the inner sanctum sanctorum. Even emperors had to bow down to enter inside. It signifies that there is nothing higher than True Knowledge and one has to be ever humble.)

If we follow the four stipulated conditions, what do we get? The Lord asssures us that:

Māmevaiṣyasi satyam pratijāne: You shall come to Me, this is the Truth, I promise.

The Lord promises that what He has said is the Truth. ''You shall come to Me'', He promises. Children always want promises from others. ''Promise me that you will get that toy for my birthday'', the child asks her parents. "I will be good but you must promise to get me what I want", the child insists.

Priyo'si me: (You are dear to Me). Arjuna was dear to Kṛṣṇa. He was His best friend. We are all dear to Him. We have the birthright to expect our parent to be dear to us, to excuse us (our faults) and lead the way to us (*sārathī*).

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥६६॥
***sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja* |**
***ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ* ||66||**

Abandoning all dharmas, *take refuge in Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sins. Do not grieve.*

śaraṇam: Refuge.
vraja: Take.
mā śucaḥ: Do not grieve.

*Śloka*s 65 (*manmanā bhava mad-bhakto*) and 66 in chapter 18 are considered by scholars as *carama ślokas*. The Lord completes his teaching with these two *ślokas*.

66 is considered the *śakti mantra*. If understood properly (having understood the message by following the 18 chapters sincerely with proper guidance), this *śloka* will give immense strength to the spiritual seeker aiming at liberation from earthly bondage. It will help them to overcome the grief caused by ignorance due to attachment.

The phrase *'sarvadhrmān'* has to be fully understood. Unfortunately this has not been so, resulting in controversial interpretations. If one follows the *Gītā* from the begining, one can see that the emphasis by the Lord has been on '*loka-kalyāṇa*'. He has giving various paths such as *karma*, *jñāna*, *dhyāna* and *bhakti* to attain "*yoga*". He has stressed *niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga*. He has repeatedly reminded the seeker to learn *buddhi-yoga* by *adhyāsa*. Using the *buddhi*, one can see the hidden beauty in this verse which shows clearly the message of *loka-kalyāṇa*.

Let us take different approaches to the understanding of the word *dharma*.

1. *Ātma-dharma*

We are all "two in one". The real one is the *ātman*. The false one is the *jīva* (ego). The *ātman* is the spark of divintiy in us. The *jīva* is the *upādhi* (medium) to express his divinity. It is the servant of the Lord.

As the Lord incarnates to uproot evil, uphold *dharma* and protect the *jagat*, our duties as his servants are only to bring *loka-kalyāṇa'* i.e., welfare of the *loka*. Identifying ourselves as the *jīva*, forgetting our inner divinity, we perform *sakāma karma* to fulfil our desires, and sometimes perform *niṣiddha karma* which harms others.

To work as the Lord's servants, we have to keep our body fit and perform daily duties as members of society. They are known as *nitya* and *naimittika karmas*. In this context our *ātma-dharma* should dictate us to perform *nitya* and *naimittika karma* and abandon *sakāma karma* and *niṣiddha karma*.

2. In our life-cycles from birth to death we go through four stages:

childhood, teenage—*brahmacarya*
adult, married life—*gṛhastha*
adult, retired life—*vānaprastha*
old age—*saṁnyāsa*

Our *śāstra*s have prescribed duties at each stage. Our *dharma* is to perform duties pertaining to each stage and abandon the duties of the other stages (only righteous duties, prescribed by the *śāstra*s), e.g. as *brahmacārī,* concentrate on learning to become a useful member of society. Avoid all sensual thoughts and actions that distract the mind from studies.

The Lord is teaching us to abandon egotistic duties in each stage. *Niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga* are the only ways to work in each stage. Surrender to the Lord by dropping the ego in actions.

3. Our body can be divided into :
   (a) *annamaya kośa,*
   (b) *prāṇamaya kośa,*
   (c) *manomaya kośa,*
   (d) *jñānamaya kośa,*
   (e) *vijñānamaya kośa,*
   (f) *ānandamaya kośa.*

(i) Working at levels (a) to (e) is egotistic.

(ii) Working at levels (a), (b) and (c) is for fulfilling personal desires, in relation to the material world.

(iii) Working at levels (d) and (e) is for fulfilling personal desire to achieve knowledge and wisdom with a view to attain *mokṣa.*

(iv) One should uplift oneself through one's duties by moving from levels (a), (b) and (c) to levels (e) and (f). He should drop even the desire to attain *mokṣa* and reach level (f). This is not for personal gains but for loka-kalyāṇa. Duty for fulfilment of desires should be abandoned. The only duty is to work as the Lord's servants and obey his commands.

4. Our duties could be :
   deha-dharma,

kula-dharma,
deśa-dharma,
loka-dharma.

It all depends upon what level one has reached in his social level as part of society. At the lowest level we are individuals and are one single unit. Performing righteous duties and looking after our bodies is *deha-dharma*. At the next level we are one unit as a nation. Performing righteous duties and looking after each other in our country is *deśa-dharma*. At the highest level we are part of the *jagat*. Performing righteous duties in looking after the welfare of the *jagat* is *loka-dharma*. At each level let each one abandon *sakāma* and *niṣiddha karma*.

Those who attain a higher level in the society, e.g., ministers, MPs, Army personnel, etc., have to consider the rest of the nation as part of their single unit. Their duties will be towards the welfare of that larger single unit and not simply to their family unit. As one rises to the higher levels one must abandon all duties and consider *kalyāṇa* as the welfare of others.

Arjuna had the welfare of subjects as his duty and in that process his relation at an individual level towards his grandfather, teacher, etc. had to be abandoned in the war of righteousness.

5. Our society has been divided into four main groups of pepole depending on their duties :

(a) *brāhmaṇa,*
(b) *kṣatriya,*
(c) *vaiśya,*
(d) *śūdra.*

Every individual with special skills would fall in one of these four groups. In the absence of educational institutions like our present system, the classification helped the continuance of various professions. This was achieved by children learning from their father and taking over the father's profession. Unfortunately, this led to the firm belief in many Hindus that it was every individual's birthright to belong to one of the four categories. So, the son of a śūdra (manual labourer with poor intellectual capacity) was called a śūdra and treated like one even though he would train himself to be, for example, to be a doctor. Conflicts have arisen among Hindus because of this misunderstanding.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has given a different meaning to this classification. He has given a detailed description of qualities for each of the four groups, depending on the predominant qualities one prossesses. So it would not be as a birthright, but a quality right (*guṇa* right) for a person to belong to any of the four groups. In a normal life-span, one could change one's qualities and get into a different grous.

The Lord wants us to lift ourselves from animal behaviour and act as humans. To lift ourselves from laziness to activity, from *niṣiddha karma* to *nitya* and *naimittika karma* as per our śāstras. Finally he wants us to lift ourselves from actions for personal gain to actions for loka-kalyāṇa.

Sarvadharmān parityajya in this context means to drop all selfish actions, work in the spirit of *niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga* and uplift oneself from qualities of a śūdra to those of a brāhmaṇā and work always for *loka-kalyāṇa.*

6. There are a number of religions in the world. In essence they all have one aim, i.e., welfare of the community. Lord Kṛṣṇa goes a step further and asks the entire universe to be a single community. He insists on *nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu* as the condition to acheive *mokṣa*.

Mamekam śaraṇam vraja : This means "surrender to me alone." We all have a physical body with the *ātman* inside. Our actions fall into :

1. Those according to our mind (*manas*).
2. Those according to our speech (*vāk*).
3. Those according to our physical body (*kāya*)

At all these three levels our actions must be surrendered to the Lord. Our thoughts, speech and our physical actions should be aimed at and related to the divinity inside and all around us. This is the true spirit of total surrender to the Lord.

Ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi means, "I shall liberate you from all sins". *Mokṣa* is a state of constant equilibrium of the mind towards the pleasures and pains of worldly life.

It is a state of constant bliss—cidānanda.

Svarga is a state of experiencing the pleasures in one's life. *Naraka* is the experience of the pains. Liberation form worldly experience of *svarga* and *naraka* is *mokṣa*.

By following the Lord's teaching we shall attain the intellectual strength to control our mind, senses and organs of action. We shall develop equanimity to our various experiences in our worldly life. We shall be able to continue our duty of universal welfare at all times of our life irrespective of whether we are experiencing severe hardship or great success. Only the Lord's teaching, if understood and followed, will give us the required strength.

Our present suffering is due to our past sins. We have to pay the penalty for these. By understanding the *Gītā* we will be able to withstand the pain which is a punishment for our sins, and we shall develop the mental strength to carry on our wordly duties at all times.

Mā śucaḥ : "Do not grieve." Arijuna started by grieving. The Lord concludes his teaching by this famous phrase, which means, do not grieve. 'Stand up' (*uttiṣṭha*), be a man and do your duty (according to the *śāstra*s).

This *śloka* is considered to be the *śakti-mantra*. It gives us the strength to fight the battle of life and experience divine bliss inside and all around everyone of us. It hepls us to uproot evil and helps us to form a single unit. It helps us to perform the Lord's command, i.e., *loka-kalyāṇa*.

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ।।६७।।

idaṁ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana |
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyaṁ na ca māṁ yo'bhyasūyati ||67||

This is never to be spoken, by you, to one who is devoid of austerity or devotion, not to one who does not render service (or to one who desires not to listen) and not to one who speaks ill of Me.

kadācana: Ever.
atapaskāya: One devoid of austerity.
na vācyam: Not to be spoken.
aśuśrūṣave: Who does not render service or who does not deserve to listen.
abhyasūyati: Speaks ill of Me.

As the Lord is coming to the end of His discourse, He is trying to tell Arjuna what types of students should receive the teaching of the *Gītā*. He has taken an indirect way for enumerating the types of people it should not be taught to. It is not to be criticised at all. After all, do we not have admission criteria in colleges and universities?

Philosophy is the topmost knowledge. All the other kinds of knowledge are in relation to worldly objects. Knowledge of the Self is the highest knowledge. So, one should be able to select the ones who should be taught. There are no marks for entry into the course here. There are only a few basic principles. The course is not barred because of sex or religion or caste of the person.

Nātapaskāya: *Tapas,* as we have found out, is austerity at mind, body and speech levels. If one has no control over one's mind, body and speech, then he craves for sensual pleasures. Such men have no capacity to control their urges. Their mind is not ready to listen to good advice.

Suppose we want to sow seeds. Do we sow it on a rock or in a barren land? The soil has to be of good quality for the seeds to grow. Similarly, the seeds of philosophy can be sown in minds that can be controlled by will-power. (The minds that can be controlled from running away to the pleasures of the world.)

Nābhaktāya: The recipient should have the capacity for devotion. He should be able to identify himself with the beloved. If the person cannot identify himself with the ideal that is taught, he cannot understand the subject.

Nāśuśrūṣave: It should not be taught to those who do not render service. This has two meanings.

(a) Service to the teacher (repeated questioning, prostrating before teacher, etc.) is a way of showing one's humbleness in the presence of Higher knowledge. One should be humble to receive the teaching. A proud, arrogant-natured person will be testing his teacher rather than improving his own knowledge.

(b) Service to Mankind. After all, the essence of the *Gītā* is universal oneness (*advaita*) and universal love. If one has no love for his fellow beings and no love for nature, if one is selfish (without human qualities) then such a person is considered to be a consumer only.

The duty of all who have learnt the *Gītā* philosophy is to spread the message to others. They have a duty towards universal welfare and they should bring out the divinity in others. What a great service to Mankind was rendered by Swami Vivekananda, and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The Guru selected the right student to spread his message.

Abhyasūyati: If a student speaks ill of his teacher, automatically one can assume that he will not listen properly to what the teacher is teaching. Respect and reverence to the teacher are essential. By speaking ill of the teacher, i.e., the Lord, who is teaching the greatest philosophy to Mankind, one is speaking ill of the philosophy also. Such persons have no right to be taught the *Gītā*. This word has another meaning also. One should not force religion on anybody. Also, conversion of faith should come from one's deep-hearted desire and love for that faith.

The *Gītā* wrongly understood or falsely interpreted, will harm society and the individual. The message in the *Gītā* is for individual upliftment and welfare of the universe. If it is taught to those who have no austerity, devotion or sense of service, then they are likely to misinterpret the message. Showing off one's knowledge of the *Gītā* is despicable. The teacher of the *Gītā* must also be humble. The student must have the yearning to learn and follow what is taught.

Finally, there is one more message in this verse. Anybody who wants to understand the *Gītā* sincerely, must look at the four qualities mentioned above:

(1) Have I got self-control?
(2) Have I got devotion to the Lord?

(3) Have I got the willingness to serve Mankind?

(4) Have I got respect for the philosophy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa?

If I have not got the above qualities, but if I still want to learn it sincerely, then I must practise and develop the four qualities in me. After that, I can get entry into the school of *Gītā* philosophy. If I develop the eagerness to be free from bondage to this world, if I want to experience the *ānanda*, then, I should prepare my mind, body and speech to receive the message of the *Gītā*.

य इदं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः ॥६८॥

ya imaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ madbhakteṣv abhidhāsyati |
bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaḥ ||68||

He who with supreme devotion to Me, will teach this profound philosophy to My devotees, shall doubtlessly come to Me.

abhidhāsyati: Shall declare.

The Lord is offering the reward of *mokṣa* to those who spread the message of the *Gītā*. He is not giving any bribes. He has put strict conditions on the teachers of the *Gītā*. The *Veda*s and *Upaniṣad*s were taught to only a selected few in the earlier days. Śrī Kṛṣṇa did not consider it to be correct. If our culture has to survive, it can do so only when generation after generation get a chance to learn it. This beautiful message of the *Gītā* has survived for thousands of years and is giving enlightenment to many.

Knowledge should be obtained first, no doubt about it. But, it should also be imparted to others. If there were no teachers, how would science survive? If there were no dedicated teachers, how would Mankind survive?

The teacher/messenger of the *Gītā* must understand the profound philosophy (*paramaṁ guhyam*) of the *Gītā*. He must have supreme devotion to the Lord (*paramā bhakti*). Unless the teacher identifies himself with the qualities of the Lord totally, he will not offer whole-hearted and sincere teaching to his students (and followers). Kṛṣṇa was born to decimate all evil and uplift *dharma*. The teacher (and messenger) must do the same. He must not only teach it but also show it in his actions.

True service to humanity lies in uprooting evil in society. It is necessary to implant moral values early in one's life. Those who can do so, do deserve the best rewards. Even if they do not look for the rewards, the true teachers/messengers will get *mokṣa*.

The Lord says, the teacher must teach the philosophy to the Lord's devotees (as discussed in the previous verse). We can understand this stanza better by taking an example. Suppose, we want to cross a busy road, we must have all faculties intact. We must follow the highway code. We should avoid dangers and pitfalls. We will then reach the other side. Similarly, if we want to cross the road of life, we must have all faculties intact, we must follow *śāstra*s and keep our inner eye open. We will eventually attain liberation.

Having known how to cross the road, it would be humane to help others also to cross the road. It would be nice to help a disabled person, a blind person or a child to cross the road. The disabled people, the blind, the children, also have a right to cross the road. A blind person or a disabled person finds it hard to cross; he cannot help others to cross. Were he to do so, it would cause accidents.

Similarly, the learned ones should help the ignorant to cross the road. They should help those who want to cross the road of life. The greatest service is not merely by one's crossing the road of life but in helping others to cross it as well. Passing the light of knowledge to the needy is the greatest service to Mankind.

न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।
भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ।।६९।।

na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priyakṛttamaḥ **|**
bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyaḥ priyataro bhuvi **||69||**

Neither is there any among men who renders dearer service to Me, nor shall there by another on earth dearer to Me than he.

priyakṛttamaḥ: Who does dearer service.
kaścit: Any.
bhavitā: Shall be.

A good teacher renders a great service. He multiplies his students in hundreds and thousands directly and indirectly.

Every year a number of children go through the teacher in any particular class. Out of those who become graduates at a later date, some may take up teaching. The knowledge from the teacher therefore passes through generations. The graduates are those who perform duties pertaining to their speciality and contribute to the welfare of society.

Among all charitable deeds *dānam* or imparting of knowledge and love are the best. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the author of the *Gītā,* therefore wants His message to spread far and wide. He hopes that at least some people take up the theme of the *Gītā* and pass it on to others. He is very happy with those who teach the *Gītā* to others. Hence He states that ''there is no other who is dearer to Me than he in the world.'' If we want to serve the Lord, we can do it in a number of ways. The best way would be to spread the message of the *Gītā*.

There are different ways to teach the *Gītā*.

(a) just like parents who teach the alphabet and numerals, the *Gītā* should be taught by the elders and parents (in every household) to the youngsters. Not only taught, but the teachers must live the Kṛṣṇa way of life which sets an example for the children.

(b) The children who have learnt some of it, should not hesitate to open up the topic of the *Gītā* in conversation with their friends. One need not be an expert in the *Gītā* completely. Whatever little one knows, whatever little one has understood, one should try to pass it on to others.

(c) There should be a gathering of devotees of the *Gītā* in all communities. They should meet often and discuss the *Gītā*. Not only discuss, but they should also do constructive spiritual work as prescribed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

A real *Gītā* Āśram is one which should reverberate with the message of the *Gītā*. Of course, there is something else that is also important. The teacher or the one who is spreading the message must have a few qualifications:

(a) He must have kindness, love and compassion to his students.

(b) He must have understood it properly. He must have read the *śāstra*s and should have improved his knowledge.

(c) He must not only be a *jñānī* but he must also be a *vijñānī*. He must have developed wisdom by practically living the life taught in the *Gītā*.

Teaching the meaning of one *śloka* is as great as teaching the entire *Gītā*. This is because, the one who has learnt, liked and understood one *śloka*, may go on to learn the entire *Gītā*. It might arouse his curiosity and bring his hidden knowledge out.

Collecting one divine virtue (our of twenty-six, chapter 16, verses 1, 2, 3) may be the starting point to collect all the twenty-six virtues.

See what Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsa found? He discovered Swami Vivekananda who spread the Master's message all over the world.

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।
ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥७०॥

adhyeṣyate ca ya imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṁvādam āvayoḥ ।
jñānayajñena tenāham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ ॥70॥

And he, who shall study this sacred dialogue of ours, by Him I shall have been worshipped by the jñāna-yajña. *This is My opinion.*

āvayoḥ: Of ours.
iṣṭaḥ syām: Shall have been worshipped.
adhyeṣyate: Shall study.

The Lord has now directed His attention from the messengers of the *Gītā* to the students/devotees of the *Gītā*.

Those who study the sacred dialogue between the Lord and Arjuna, please the Lord as well. After all, the entire discourse is on *dharma*. The Lord says "*imaṁ dharmyam*" (this *dharma*). He has not said "this *Gītā*." The entire *Gītā* in nothing but a study of *dharma* as prescribed by the *Veda*s.

The first word used in the *Gītā* is '*dharmakṣetre*'. King Dhṛtarāṣṭra also uses the word *dharma*. He wants the reporter Sañjaya to narrate the events on the battlefield in the sacred place of Kurukṣetra.

Study of the *Gītā* means reading and understanding its meaning, and living the meaning of the *Gītā*. Spiritual evolution should take place by the study of the *Gītā*. Such a study will then be considered as *jñāna-yajña*.

Yajña, as we have discussed before (chapter 3), is a ritual wherein oblations are poured into the sacrificial fire to invoke the Lord. *Jñāna-yajña* means the *yajña* of knowledge. By obtaining knowledge, one should be prepared to sacrifice false values of life into the sacrificial fire. One should be prepared to burn away his bad instincts and tendencies.

By understanding the *Gītā*, by living the life of the *Gītā*, the student would be able to sacrifice his ego at the altar of knowledge, Our *dharma* is our *ātmā* (*ātma-dharma*). Our *adharma* is our ego (*deha-dharma, mano-dharma*). We should stop acts that merely satisfy our body and mind. We should offer them as oblations onto the sacrificial fire at the altar of knowledge. This is *jñāna-yajña*.

Our knowledge which has accumulated rust due to bodily connections with the outer world needs de-rusting. By putting it in *jñāna-yajña*, by studying the *Gītā*, we can remove the rust from our knowledge. Really, we all have the knowledge inside us. Unfortunately, our *vāsanā*s have obscured it. We do not have to spend money and buy it from anywhere else. We have to burn away our *vāsanā*s, and lo and behold! our true knowledge will shine forth brilliantly.

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।
सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभाँल्लोकान् प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।।७१।।

***śraddhāvān anasūyaś ca śṛṇuyād api yo naraḥ* |**
***so'pi muktaḥ śubhāṁllokān prāpnuyāt puṇyakarmaṇām* ||71||**

That man who hears this, full of faith and free from malice; he too shall be liberated and attain the happy worlds of the righteous.

anasūyaḥ: Free from malice.
śṛṇuyādapi: May hear.
saḥ api: He even.

The Lord in His mercy has included all classes of people to benefit from the *Gītā*.

A teacher of the *Gītā* is one who has understood the *Gītā*, lives the life of the *Gītā* and teaches the *Gītā*. A student of the *Gītā* is one who has a craving to learn the *Gītā*.

There is another class of people. They are illiterate and ignorant. What should they do? Are they not entitled to be uplifted? Are they not entitled to happiness? This verse is for such people. Like everybody else, they also must fulfil some conditions. The Lord insists on two conditions to qualify to be a listener of the *Gītā*.

(1) **Faith**: The listener must have faith in the *Gītā*. He should be prepared to listen keenly and understand it. He should be prepared to follow what it says. (The teacher/speaker must use simple words to explain the *Gītā*.) To understand the words, to absorb the words and assimilate them and to live the life of what is learnt is real *śraddhā*. It should not be blind faith.

(2) **Anasūyā**: The listener should be free from malice towards the philosophy of the *Gītā* and the philosopher (*guru*). The listener should have a pure heart. It is the sense-organs of the listener which receive the message of the *Gītā*. They direct it to the mind. If such a mind is not pure, if such a mind has malice and hatred (towards what is taught, or who is teaching) then, surely, the message will not seep into their minds.

One should have an open mind to listen to the *Gītā*. Of course, one should ask questions to genuinely clarify doubts. Sincere questions will please the *guru*, they will bring the best out of the *guru*. On the other hand, if one goes only to test the knowledge of the *guru*, to find fault in the *guru*, then the purpose of that person would be not to learn but to show off his own superficial knowledge.

So, having a good quality (faith) and dropping a bad quality (*asūyā*) makes the listener achieve hapiness. He will then get his share of the reward from listening to the *Gītā*. His reward is liberation. His reward will be attaining the heavenly state.

From what we know, from what we have learnt before, such people will find suitable environment in future births. They will, in course of time, get a chance to burn all impurities and achieve *mokṣa*. Of course, it takes time, a long long time.

कच्चिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा ।
कच्चिदज्ञानसंमोहः प्रनष्टस्ते धनञ्जय ॥७२॥

kaccid etac chrutaṁ pārtha tvayaikāgreṇa cetasā |
kaccid ajñānasaṁmohaḥ pranaṣṭas te dhanañjaya ||72||

Has this been heard by you, O Pārtha, with single-pointed concentration? O Arjuna, has the delusion caused by your ignorance been destroyed?

tvayā: By you.
kaccid: Whether.
śrutam: Heard.
ekāgreṇa cetasā: With one-pointed concentration.
pranaṣṭaḥ: Destroyed.

The teacher, Lord Kṛṣṇa, knows His student well. He knows by the questions asked during the discourse that Arjuna has understood the message. Any real teacher usually puts these questions. Have you heard it properly? Did your mind not wander away during the lessons? Have you understood?

Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa to help him overcome his ignorance. He asked Him for directions to the right path. Śrī Kṛṣṇa now asks: is your ignornace gone?

A physician at the end of his treatment asks his patient, ''How do you feel now?'' He knows that his patient has recovered but he wants the words to come from the patients's mouth. The patient must mentally feel that his illness is cured. The physician cannot read the patient's mind. ''Does the patient feel he is cured'', is the physician's question.

Arjuna's illness was ignorance. He was ignorant of his real nature (*ātmā*). He was ignorant of the real nature of all. He was ignorant of the meaning of *dharma* and liberation. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's medicine cured the ignorance. He asks His patient: *kaccid ajñāna-saṁmohaḥ pranaṣṭaste?* "Has your ignorance caused by delusion been destroyed?" Arjuna was in a state of delusion. He had identified himself with the physical body. He said 'I', 'mine' several times in his statement to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The delusion, 'ego', caused by ignorance of *ātmā* was supposed to be destroyed by obtaining knowledge (*jñāna*).

Dhanañjaya: This is another name of Arjuna. Arjuna acquired material wealth by his heroic deeds. He had defeated innumerable enemies on the battlefield. Lord Kṛṣṇa now hopes that Arjuna had aquired spiritual wealth also by acquiring *jñāna*. He hoped that Arjuna had destroyed his greatest, powerful enemy, ignorance.

We, the ordinary mortals, who are Dhṛtarāṣṭras (holding on blindly to our body which is not our own) should become Dhanañjayas. We should win the wealth of knowledge. We should destroy ignornace.

अर्जुन उवाच

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाऽच्युत ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसंदेहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥७३॥

arjuna uvāca

***naṣto mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvatprasādān mayā'cyuta* |**
***sthito'smi gatasaṁdehaḥ kariṣye vacanaṁ tava* ||73||**

Arjuna said

> *O Acyuta, my delusion is destroyed. I have regained my memory, through your grace. I am firm, my doubts are gone, I will do according to your word.*

smṛtiḥ: Memory.
labdhā: Gained.
gatasaṁdehaḥ: Free from doubt.

In the first chapter, verses 28, 29, 30, Arjuna described his state of mind to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He said that he was shaky, his limbs had lost their hold, his Gāṇḍīva was falling from his hands, his tongue was dry and he could not stand even. It was due to delusion. It was due to ignorance of his real nature.

What a transformation! A great man, who acted like a eunuch, is now ready to face the battle of life. Arjuna had lost his memory (*smṛti*). He did not know who he was. Now, he knew exactly who he was. He was an agent of the Lord to fight *adharma* and to uphold *dharma.*

This happened by God's grace. Arjuna does not say ''I took medicine and I got better''. He is ever obliged to the Lord. He considers regaining of memory to be due to God's grace. This humbleness is an essential quality in spiritual progress.

Smṛtir labdhā: Regained memory. He was an *ajñānī* and now he has become a *jñānī*. It is not as though the Lord gave him anything special. The Lord only took off the veil of *māyā* that was shrouding him. The Lord opened his intellectual eye (eye of knowledge).

Gatasaṁdehaḥ: Arjuna has no doubt as to who he is now. All his doubts and dejecion are vanished. He has developed self-confidence. His confidence had left him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa simply gave him back the confidence.

Acyuta: It means the one who does not fall. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the real knowledge, is standing high above everything. He does not slip from His high position of the highest knowledge.

Kariṣye vacanam tava: (I will do according to your bidding.)

Arjuna is now ready to fight the battle. He is ready to face evil. He is ready to uphold *dharma*.

In our battle of life too, we should listen to our inner voice (our conscience). We should not do evil. we must live a divine life for the welfare of the universe. We must fight *āsura bhāva*s in us by using our *daivī sampad*. We must cultivate all divine virtues and win the tug-of-war of life.

सञ्जय उवाच

इत्यहं वासुदेवस्य पार्थस्य च महात्मनः ।
संवादमिममश्रौषमद्भुतं रोमहर्षणम् ।।७४।।

sañjaya uvāca

ity ahaṁ vāsudevasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ |
saṁvādam imam aśrauṣam adbhutaṁ romaharṣaṇam ||74||

Sañjaya said

Thus have I heard this wonderful dialogue between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the high-souled Pārtha, which causes my hair to stand on end.

In the last verse Arjuna said, ''I will do according to your bidding.''

The discourse of the *Gītā* started because Arjuna did not want to fight and his Gāṇḍīva fell from his hands. So, the teaching of the *Gītā* ended in the last verse. The patient, Arjuna was cured of his illness (ignorance). The ignorant man became a *jñānī*, and hence he is given the title *mahātmā* by Sañjaya. He has become a great-souled person.

We all have a great soul of the Lord inside us. If we develop all *daivī-sampat* qualities, we are also entitled to receive the title of *Mahātmā*.

The dialogue between Vāsudeva and Pārtha: It is the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, as witnessed by Sañjaya and reported to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The words Vāsudeva and Pārtha have special significance in this context.

The dialogue, as we know, is between the learned and the ignorant. It is between a Higher Soul and a lower soul. Vāsudeva is Lord of Vasus. In the *śāstra*s, Vasus (who are eight in number) are considered as Lords of time. Vāsudeva, in this word should be read as 'Lord of Time'. Who is the Lord of Time?

The Lord is eternal. He is the conscious principle behind life's activities. He was there yesterday, he will be there tomorrow and He is present today. He will be the same always. This Truth, this knowledge has no time limit. It stands true for all times. This eternal, conscious principle is Vāsudeva.

Pārtha: It is derived from the word *pārthiva* (earth). Earth is matter. It is the unmanifested form of the *prakṛti*. It came to life on being blessed by the *ātman* (the Lord). The Knowledge (*Puruṣa*) and the matter (*prakṛti*) represent Vāsudeva and Arjuna respectively.

Sañjaya was ecstatic. He had heard the dialogue directly from the Master. Blessed was Sañjaya. It is no wonder he is using superlative words to express his emotions. He cannot control his emotions. He forgets that he is the servant of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra and should not be praising the Pāṇḍavas.

व्यासप्रसादाच्छ्रुतवानेतद् गुह्यमहं परम् ।
योगं योगेश्वरात्कृष्णात्साक्षात्कथयतः स्वयम् ।।७५।।
vyāsaprasādāc chrutavān etad guhyam ahaṁ param **I**
yogaṁ yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam **II75II**

Through the grace of Vyāsa I have heard this supreme and most secret Yoga, direct from Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Yoga, Himself declaring it.

kathayataḥ: Declaring.
śrutavān: Have heard.

First of all, Sañjaya is indirectly offering his respect to Śrī Vyāsa. After all, Vyāsa gave him the power to witness the entire battle so that he could narrate it to his king.

Guhyatamaṁ param: Sañjaya admits that what he had heard was supreme knowledge and most secret. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said so before and Sañjaya accepts it.

Yogam: *Yoga* is union between two which brings happiness. Union of the physical body with objects from the world brings happiness. It is material *yoga*. That happiness does not last long. It brings sorrow in course of time. The union of ego (body, mind, intellect) with the *ātmā* is also *yoga*. It is spiritual *yoga*. It brings everlasting happiness. It leads to the union of *ātmā* with *Paramātmā*.

Yogeśvara: Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Lord and Master of *Yoga*. Yogeśvara. Sañjaya is reminding this secret to his king. If the Lord is on Pāṇḍavas' side, how can Dhṛtarāṣṭra win the battle? His sons are bound to be killed. Sañjaya even at the last minute is trying to make his king see the reality and stop unnecessary bloodshed.

राजन् संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य संवादमिममद्भुतम् ।
केशवार्जुनयोः पुण्यं हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः ॥७६॥

rājan saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya saṁvādam imam adbhutam |
keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyaṁ hṛṣyāmi ca muhur muhuḥ ||76||

O king, as I recall again and again, this wonderful and holy dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again.

Saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya: Remembering again and again. This method is called *mananam* in Sanskrit.

We should all hear the *Gītā* or read the *Gītā* first. Repeatedly we should think of what we have heard or read. We should understand its meaning and analyse the meaning. This is the second stage in learning (*jñānam*). We should then bring into practical application what has been learnt. We should firmly establish ourselves in the message of the philosophy of the *Gītā* (*vijñānam*).

The result is realising
Sat
Cit
and **Ananda**.

Sañjaya is expressing his satisfaction at recollecting the message of the *Gītā*.

Puṇyam: The philosophy of the *Gītā* bestows *puṇya* on the listener. His sins will be wiped off by his *Gītā* way of living. The *Gītā* philosophy is a sure cure for one's ignorance of one's own real nature.

तच्च संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य रूपमत्यद्भुतं हरेः ।
विस्मयो मे महान्राजन्हृष्यामि च पुनः पुनः ॥७७॥

tac ca saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya rūpam atyadbhutaṁ hareḥ |
vismayo me mahān rājan hṛṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ ||77||

O King, as often as I recall that most wonderful form of the Lord, great is my astonishment, and I rejoice again and again.

This verse is a continuation of expression of Sañjaya's state of ecstatic joy. He was very happy on recollecting repeatedly the Lord's message. In this verse, He is expressing happiness at recollecting the *Viśvarūpa* form of the Lord.

No doubt Sañjaya was astonished at seeing the Form. But He also rejoiced on seeing the form. He is repeatedly recollecting the wonderful form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥७८॥

yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ |
tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama ||78||

Wherever is Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of yoga, wherever there is Pārtha, the archer, there are prosperity, victory, happiness, expansion and sound policy. This is my conviction.

dhanurdharaḥ: Wielder of the bow.
bhūtiḥ: Happiness.
dhruvā: Firm.
nīti: Policy.

This is the concluding or 701st verse of the *Gītā*. It is full of meaning. If one has understood the philosophy so far, he would not find difficulty in following the meaning here.

Yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇaḥ: (Wherever there is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Yoga). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the master of all forms of *yoga* (*karma, bhakti, jñāna, dhyāna*). He is the embodiment of all the *yoga*s.

A spark of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *ātman* (Soul) is inside us. He is activating us. He, the Eternal Spiritual force, is inside us. Of course, as He is deep inside and we have various coverings on it, both subtle and physical, He is hidden. The intellect, the mind and physical body hide the spirituality in us.

Yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ: (Wherever there is Arjuna, the archer.) The Gāṇḍīva of Arjuna represents his action state. It represents his kṣatriya state. Arjuna in us, is our subtle and physical body. Pārtha in us is the matter (*prakṛti* in us). We have the weapons of *karma* with us. We all have duties to perform.

Arjuna was ready with the bow to face the enemy. It is like us who are ready with our duties to face the battle of life. Arjuna is the material side of us. Wherever there is union of spirit and *prakṛti*, wherever there is union of knowledge and action, one gets the following reward: *śrī vijayo bhūtiḥ dhruvā nītiḥ*. There is prosperity, victory, happiness, expansion and sound policy.

What is one looking for in life? We all look for prosperity and victory in what we do. We look for happiness from prosperity and victory, we want that happiness to last long. Lastly, we want to expand the policy that brings happiness. We want to pass it on to our family.

This is only posible if one remembers the presence of Lord Kṛṣṇa and brings Him out in our actions. After all, Lord Kṛṣṇa wants universal welfare. He wants us to remember that the same *ātmā* is in all. There is no *dvaita* (i.e., two); there is *advaita* (i.e., non-two, one).

It is not me and *ātman*; it is only *ātman*. It is not me and my family; it is only one single unit. It is not my family and my community, it is only one single unit. It is not my community and my nation, it is only one single unit. It is not my nation and the universe, it is only one single unit. It is supreme *yoga*.

It is *Paramātmā*, the supreme Lord using knowledge of *ātmā* (Kṛṣṇa), and bodily actions (Arjuna). If one can win the battle of life and kill all *adharma* (*vāsanā*s accumulated due to desires, which are *adharma* because they satisfy the ego) he can then attain purity and achieve liberattion.

Jñāna and *karma* go hand in hand. The *Gītā*, even in the last verse, reminds us of doing our duty. It wants all of us to perform the sacred *ātma-dharma*. It wants us to perform *niṣkāma karma* and *karma-phala-tyāga*. This can be done by obtaining knowledge from elders, *śāstra*s, the scriptures. Knowledge makes us work better. Work makes us get more knowledge.

Kṛṣṇa alone represents spirit. Spirit on its own can achieve nothing. Knowledge alone can achieve nothing. Knowledge combined with action brings wisdom. Wisdom brings peace, prosperity and victory.

The future generations can live in prosperity. We can leave a better future for our children. All of us should develop our spirituality, i.e., we must invoke knowledge. We must invoke the Yogeśvara.

We must improve our moral values. Bringing together our spiritual and moral values is real *yoga*. Any nation with a policy for spiritual and moral values, which it enforces firmly, which the subjects follow firmly, will have prosperity. All nations which have a sound policy will expand. Other nations respect such a nation.

The sound policy of a nation will also bring forth the dormant faculty in the community. The nation will live in the spirit of love and cooperation and its citizens will work hard and bring prosperity.

Mama matiḥ: My conviction. Sañjaya is totally convinced that this is his conviction. He has understood the *Gītā* well. The first verse of the *Gītā* starts with the word *dharma*. The last verse of the *Gītā* ends with the word *mama*. Put together, it is: 'My *dharma*'.

Philosophy of the *Gītā* is My *dharma*. What is it? *Ātma-dharma*. What is *ātma-dharma*? Divinity. Where is *ātmā*? It is inside all of us.

My *dharma* is to recognise divinity in me and everywhere and in everybody.

My *dharma* is respecting the divinity.

My *dharma* is doing *karma* with no sense of ego and no attachment to fruits of action.

My *dharma* is to recognise the presence of *Paramātmā* everywhere.

My *dharma* is *advaita*.

AHAṀ BRAHMĀSMI
TAT TVAM ASI.

इति श्रीमहाभारते शतसाहस्र्यां संहितायां वैयासिक्यां
भीष्मपर्वणि श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां
योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे मोक्षसंन्यासयोगो
नाम अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ॥

iti śrimahābhārate śatasāhasryāṁ saṁhitāyāṁ
vaiyāsikyāṁ bhīṣmaparvaṇi śrīmad-bhagavadgitā-
sūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṁ yogaśāṣtre śrī-
kṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāde mokṣa-saṁnyāsa-yogo
nāma aṣṭādaśo'dhyāyaḥ ||

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Dr. Pathikonda Viswambara Nath was born at Hospet, Bellary District, Karnataka State, India.

He got his M.B.B.S. Degree in 1964 from Mysore University. He went to U.K. in 1969 and is now settled as a General Medical Practitioner at Stanley, County Durham.

His interest in the *Gītā* increased on reading books on the *Gītā* by Śrī Swamy Vidyaprakashananda (Sukha Brahmashrama, Kalahasti, Andhra Pradesh, India, author of *Gītā-Makarandam)* and late Swami Chinmayananda. The two books gave him courage to face the problems in his life. He considered both the Swāmijīs as his *gurus*.

He presented a paper on the meaning of *Gītopadeśam* picture at the 10th International *Gītā* Conference at Harrow, Wembley, U.K. in August 1994. Preceding the conference, he had a chance to meet Śrī Hari Har Ji Maharaj, President of Gītā Ashram of the world. Maharaj Ji advised him to write this commentary on the *Gītā*.

Dr. Nath was awarded the title "MBE" (Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) by Her Majesty, The Queen of Britain for his services to the community on June 13, 1998. He has also received the "Rajyotsava" award from the Government of Karnataka for his services on November 1, 2001.

Dr. Pathikonda Viswambara Nath is a Doctor practising General Medicine in the United Kingdom. It is heart-warming that an eminent doctor steeped in the western tradition of rationalism and scientific temper has turned his mind to the most profound set of contemplations on some of the unresolvable issues of man’s eternal spiritual quest. Srimad Bhagavadgita is a part of Trinity (Prasthanatrayee) of Hindu religious texts. It encompasses cosmology, sociology, anthropology, the duties of man, conduct, human affairs in all relationships. Most of all, it is the most valuable treatise on psychology dealing with great obstacles such as ego and over-attachment to worldly goods. It is the shining embodiment of eternal wisdom.

Spiritual truths are not reached or attained by the workings of the logical mind. The compass of the logical mind is narrow and limited. All great spiritual truths are beyond this limited circle. They are perceived or experienced in a supra-sensual state. Srimad Bhagavadgita expounds the goals of this spiritual life. It also provides a unique technology for their attainment.

The author’s own reflections on the great issues of the ultimate purpose of creation, both individual and cosmic, spring from his own inner-most experiences. An author’s words acquire lustre and significance in proportion to the state of his own spiritual evolution. Dr. Viswambara Nath has poured into this work the intensity of his own life’s experiences. His reflections on the meaning of the text have emerged from the crucible of intense rigours and struggles of a spiritual life and his perceptions of the spiritual destiny of man acquired through the language of the Self,. The wisdom and the clarity of vision that these pages unfold are the result of a spiritual life, meticulously lived. The author has grown two blades of grass where one grew.

Relentless pursuit of wealth and power, not as means to higher spiritual goals and greater happiness of society but purely as an end in itself, is a symptom of a deadly disease. Wealth and power are desirable and even necessary as means to higher ends, not otherwise. Dr. Viswambara Nath has conveyed this great message,. Without such values man indeed degenerates into a state of existence indistinguishable from that of animal. Did not Bhartrihari say:

येषां न विद्या न तपो न दानं ज्ञानं न शीलं न गुणो न धर्मः
ते मर्त्यलोके भुवि भारभूता मनुष्यरूपेण मृगाश्चरन्ति ।